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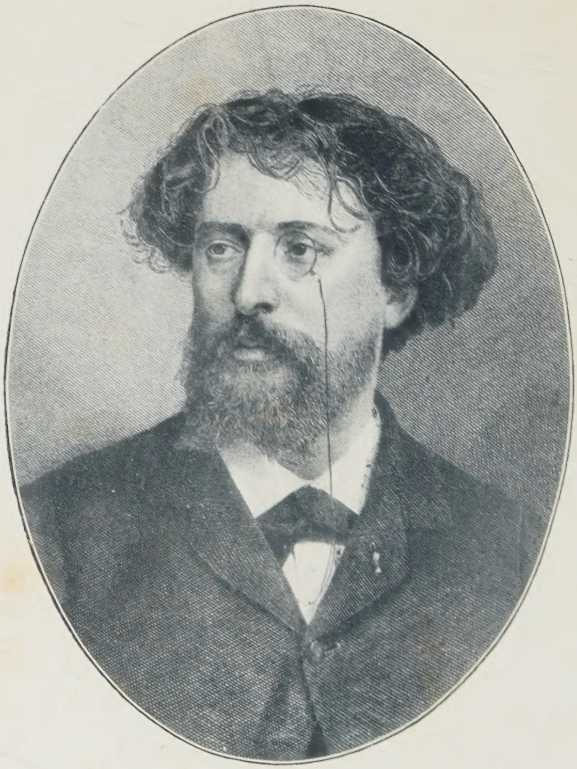

ALPHONSE DAUDET
From a steel engraving

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Daudet

Alphonse Daudet's

Short Stories

Master Cornille's Secret
The Curé of Cucugnan
The Man with the Golden Brain
Etc.

Translated by
George Burnham Ives

With an Introduction by
William Peterfield Trent

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
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Introduction

Alphonse Daudet

(1840–1897)

IT is not necessary to say that the task of selecting representative stories of Daudet is rendered difficult chiefly by the remarkable fecundity, variety, and sustained power of his genius. But while it is not necessary to say this, in saying it one really gives the best reason for undertaking such a task of selection. For a writer characterised by fecundity, variety, and sustained power is obviously a master of his own kind, and it is always pleasant and profitable to endeavour, even if it be for the thousandth time, to make the work of a master better known. Now in this busy age and in this world of many books—even of many truly good books—it is idle to expect that the complete work, or a large part of the work of any master, save perhaps of a few

supreme ones, can get itself read by more than a comparatively small section of the reading public. Yet the large, busy public is by no means totally indifferent to the work of the great writers of whom it has heard in a more or less vague way, and it is generally willing to acquaint itself with that work when a convenient opportunity offers. Experience has shown that there is no better way to interest the public in a writer or a group of writers than by presenting it with well-chosen volumes of selections. Think of how many lovers of poetry Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* has made—surely far more than the old editions of *The British Poets* in a hundred or more volumes ever succeeded in making. Just so in the case of Daudet, it seems idle to expect that our own large, alien public can find the time to read, whether in the original or in translation, the whole of his two most important collections of stories and sketches—the *Letters from My Mill* (1869) and the *Monday Tales* (1873). Much less can it be

expected to read the prose fantasies collected with his poems, or the tales to be found in *Artists' Wives,* in the volume entitled *La Fédor,* with its descriptive sub-title, *Pages from Life,* or elsewhere among his unfortunately still scattered works.* [See page xxiv.]

For various reasons that need not be detailed, it has seemed best to take the tales and sketches here chosen to represent Daudet from the two volumes named first above. One reason is particularly cogent, to wit, that it was these two collections that Daudet took pains to revise and enlarge, transferring to them stories that appeared first in other collections. For example, the definitive *Letters from My Mill* was augmented by several pieces taken from the *Sketches and Landscapes* that originally followed *Robert Helmont,* but are no longer to be found with that interesting study of war time. So also several stories were transferred from the *Letters to an Absentee* to the *Monday Tales.* Although Daudet, sometimes with good reason, withdrew

from circulation not a few of his stories and sketches, it is idle to think that in the case of so great a writer they will remain in oblivion, and it is much to be wished that the work of preparing the needed definitive and inclusive edition of his writings should be begun at once. No thorough study of his evolution as a short-story writer can now be made without the trouble and expense of securing books long out of print.

The two main series of stories (*Letters from My Mill* and *Monday Tales*) contain between sixty and seventy pieces, of which not quite a third have been selected. It is, of course, to be hoped that the new reader of Daudet will be induced to read both collections in full, and that he will pass on to at least two of the inimitably humorous Tartarin books—*Tartarin of Tarascon* and *Tartarin on the Alps*—and to the long series of Daudet's excellent novels—to *Fromont, Jr., and Risler, Sr.*, to *Jack*, to *The Nabob*, to *Kings in Exile*, to *Numa Roumestan*, if to no others. Yet why append the qualify-

ing phrase? The reader who has read these books of Daudet is not likely to wish to omit even the books of what is often called his decline—for example, *The Immortal,* with its scathing satire on the French Academy. Nor will such a reader, if he be fairly able to comprehend Continental views on relationships not fully discussed by Englishmen and Americans, care to take leave of Daudet without having read what is probably his strongest and most artistic book—the much discussed *Sapho.* And if he have become a true admirer of Daudet the man — which is what nearly all his readers become — he will be standing greatly in his own light if he do not read that most charming of youthful autobiographies, marred though it be by the romantic, fictitious ending, the inimitable *Little What's His Name.* But this is no place for a catalogue of Daudet's writings.

If, however, the reader of the nineteen stories that follow is not able, for one cause or another, to develop his acquaintance with

Daudet into intimacy, he may comfort himself with the thought that he knows the great Frenchman in what is to many of his admirers his most attractive capacity. It is already quite apparent that a number of Daudet's elaborate novels are not wearing well, and it is a question whether more than two or three of them are well enough constructed to bid defiance to time. One may cherish a lively hope that Tartarin in his best estate is destined to live long as a care-dispeller, one may fear that the world will never cease to need the lessons taught by *Sapho,* one may believe that *The Nabob,* with its wonderfully effective scenes and two or three admirably painted portraits, may survive so as by fire. But even Daudet's most devoted readers may well be wary of predicting a very long life for many of his other novels, even for *Numa Roumestan,* with its excellent elements of the true comedy of manners, even for *Fromont, Jr., and Risler, Sr.,* with its distinct power of characterisation, expressed especially in the selfish visionary, Delobelle,

the actor out of employment and living on his vanity and his wife and daughter.

It requires much less critical confidence and courage to predict a very long life, if not practical immortality, for Daudet's best short stories. His two chief collections represent in epitome the main elements that critics have discovered in the man and his work. They represent Daudet the poet, with his exquisite fancy, his winning charm, his subtle, indescribable style, his susceptibility to all that is lovely and joyous in nature and in human life; in short, in his sunny, mercurial Provençal temperament. This Daudet is seen in full measure in *Letters from My Mill,* if indeed this book be not the most charming he ever wrote, the one we most often and willingly reread, the one we should choose for a companion if we were limited in our choice. But there was another Daudet more or less superimposed upon this sunny, poetic Daudet, true child of Provence. Upon few Frenchmen of a generation ago did the terrible years of the Franco-Prussian War

and the Commune produce a more sobering impression than upon Daudet. The romanticist and poet deepened into a realistic observer of human life in all its phases. Impressions and fancies were more and more supplanted by accurate notes, later carefully worked up into novels that dealt in increasing measure with the tragic, the sordid, the ironical features of life. The poet and humourist did not, of course, disappear; but they struggled with the realist, the satirist, one might almost say, the naturalist. This matured, deepened Daudet, who finds his home and chief interests in seething Paris rather than in peaceful Provence, is seen, not to the full, but to a marked degree and very attractively in the *Monday Tales*. The two stories which a majority of his readers would select as the most pathetic he ever wrote, *The Last Class* and *The Siege of Berlin,* are in this volume. That terrible, almost exaggerated indictment of incompetence in high places, *The Game of Billiards,* is also there, and so is the effective, if somewhat

overwrought, *Vision of the Judge of Colmar,* not here translated, but worth reading as an impressive variation on the theme of Dr. Hale's *The Man Without a Country. Monday Tales* contains, moreover, some wonderfully vivid sketches of the gruesome sights that met Daudet's eyes during the siege, and thus preludes the realistic work of later years. Yet it has its fantasies and its comedies also. What could be better of its kind than *The Little Pies?* What better than that vivid reminiscence of childish mendacity, *The Pope is Dead,* the forerunner of the posthumous *First Journey, First Falsehood,* itself a curious variation on the theme of Balzac's *A Start in Life?* Still, it can hardly be denied that it is not the lighter things—even such delightful conceptions as that of the Parisian clock that transforms the manners and morals of a respectable Munich family (*The Bougival Clock*)—that give the collection of *Monday Tales* its dominant tone. The book takes its colour for many of us from *The Last Class,* from *The*

Siege of Berlin, from pathetic sketches like *Mothers,* from other pictures of the siege, especially from the poignant story here given, *The Child Spy.*

But, important as *Monday Tales* is among Daudet's books and among the world's notable collections of stories, it seems to yield precedence as a book to his earlier collection, *Letters from My Mill.* The old windmill, the writer's local habitation, and the Southern setting, whether of Provence proper or of Corsica or of Algeria, lend the book a unity (more apparent, it is true, than real) and an individuality that *Monday Tales* does not possess. Perhaps its nearest analogue in our own literature is Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse,* which has a more felicitous title and doubtless appeals to introspective temperaments more than Daudet's expansive masterpiece does. The main point is, however, that both books possess an atmosphere, if we may so phrase it; in the one case a typically Northern, in the other, a typically Southern

atmosphere. It is a curious fact that for the Southern analogue to Hawthorne's delightful book, we should have to go to French literature, and not to that other American master of the short story, with his Southern rearing, Edgar Allan Poe. But Poe was at home in a land that has no local colour, and the curious fact just noted becomes all the more curious when we remember what a reception Baudelaire and other Frenchmen have given to Poe's tales. It is pleasant to think of the two republics interchanging books instead of shots, of our lending the French the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque,* of their lending us the *Letters from My Mill.*

As has already been said, the Daudet of the *Letters* is the sunny Provençal poet, the expansive genius who admits us to a charming intimacy. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the tales and sketches this poet gives us are mere happy improvisations thrown off in moments of inspiration by an easy, affluent writer full of life and youth.

If they were merely this they would still be charming, but one would have good cause to doubt the permanence of their charm. It is because we know from his biographers that Daudet put his best art into these slight stories, that he would spend a day wrestling with an intractable sentence or paragraph, and because we know from the best French critics and feel in our own imperfect way that his style is in every sense individual, flexible, sustained, and exquisite without a trace of weakness, that we are as sure as we can be in such matters that the *Letters from My Mill* will live. We are sure also that such stories as *The Last Class* and *The Siege of Berlin* will live also, but of the permanence of *Monday Tales* as a whole, much more of such a collection as *Artists' Wives,* we may well have a reasonable doubt.

Twelve of our nineteen pieces have been selected from the *Letters* and there are still wonderfully good things left. *The Stars* is an idyll no reader is likely to forget, and

immediately upon it follows that pathetic domestic tragedy of the sound-hearted country youth and the depraved town girl (*L'Arlésienne*). The "touch of nature" that makes the whole world kin is found in full measure in *Bixiou's Portfolio;* and much of the sultry, drowsy beauty of the semi-tropics in *At Milianah.* As for the dozen miniature masterpieces here presented, appreciative criticism seems superfluous. Will one soon forget the knife-grinder shrinking from the jeers and taunts of his fellow passengers, or the pathetic secret of the old miller, or that delightfully told apologue of the rash pet of Monsieur Seguin, or the vengeance of the Pope's mule, or the Plutarch of the lighthouse-keeper, or the truly effective sermon of the Abbé Martin, the Jonathan Edwards of Cucugnan, or the appealing picture of the old couple, or the pathetic irony of the death of the little Dauphin? Surely no one can forget these things, and just as surely when stories and sketches stand out as clearly in after months and years as

these do, they are to be regarded as masterpieces and as masterpieces of a particularly rare kind. For unless a slight story be extraordinarily well told it slips the mind with surprising facility. But there are still four pieces to mention, none of them inferior, perhaps all of them not merely equal but superior to the tales that have preceded them. *The Legend of the Man with the Golden Brain* is a striking example of the blending of bizarre fancy with deep imagination. *The Three Low Masses* points its moral with a grotesque humour and a picturesque descriptive power, to say nothing of dramatic force, that are rarely found in combination. *The Two Inns* opens up in its eight short pages an almost limitless vista of suffering and patience. Surely Matthew Arnold's phrase "piercing pathos" applies here if it does to anything in literature. Finally, the irony of *The Elixir of the Reverend Father Gaucher,* tempered as it is by Daudet's humour and kindliness, leaves us with a satisfying sense

of that fecundity, variety, and sustained power of his genius which was claimed at the beginning of this unnecessary Introduction.

In conclusion, let us make no mistake about our phrase "sustained power." Readers of one of M. Lemaître's delightful appreciations of Daudet will doubtless have carried away the word "charm" as best connoting the character of Daudet's genius and of the effects it produces upon his admirers. Probably no critic has ever written of Daudet without using this indefinable word, or some word or phrase equivalent to it. Daudet's work, whether in his novels or in his stories, lacks the range and the tremendous, overwhelming, titanic impressiveness of Balzac's. For some of us it lacks the firm, the ineluctable art of Maupassant. But it would seem a mistake to suppose that his genius therefore lacks sustained power. There are many kinds of power, and that exerted by charm is not the least potent of them, and perhaps the most continuously satisfying and beneficent. Of

this powerful charm, even if it does stop short of enchantment, Daudet, in his brief stories at least, possesses an abundance, and because of this fact his *Letters from My Mill* bids fair to become a possession forever, not merely for France but for the world.

W. P. Trent.

*Since the above was written, a complete edition of Daudet's works, in eighteen volumes, has been announced in Paris.

W. P. T.

Letters from My Mill

(1869)

The Beaucaire Diligence

The Beaucaire Diligence

IT was the day of my arrival here. I had taken the Beaucaire diligence, a respectable old vehicle which had not far to go before reaching home again, but which sauntered all along the way, in order to have the appearance at night of arriving from a long distance. There were five of us on the imperial, without counting the driver.

First, a drover from Camargue, a short, thick-set, hairy man, with an odour of herds, and with large bloodshot eyes, and silver rings in his ears; next, two natives of Beaucaire, a baker and his son-in-law, both very red-faced and short-breathed, but with magnificent profiles, like two Roman medals with the image of Vitellius. Lastly, on the box-seat with the driver, a man—no, a cap, an enormous rabbit-skin cap, which did not say

much and gazed at the road with a distressed expression.

All those people knew one another and talked aloud of their affairs very freely. The man from Camargue said that he had come from Nîmes, summoned by the examining magistrates because of a blow with a pitch-fork that he had dealt a shepherd. Tempers are quick in Camargue. And what about Beaucaire! Would you believe that our two Beaucairians actually threatened to cut each other's throats on the subject of the Blessed Virgin? It seems that the baker was from a parish devoted from time immemorial to the Madonna, to her whom the Provençals call the Good Mother, and who carries the little Jesus in her arms; the son-in-law, on the contrary, sang in the choir of a brand-new church, consecrated to the Immaculate Conception, that lovely smiling image which is represented with her arms hanging at her sides and her hands full of rays of light. The quarrel arose from that fact. You should

have seen how those two good Catholics abused each other and their Madonnas :

"A pretty creature your Immaculate One is!"

"Get out with your Good Mother!"

"She saw some fine doings in Palestine, that hussy of yours!"

"And what about yours, hey? The ugly witch! Who knows what she did n't do? Ask St. Joseph."

Nothing save the gleaming of knives was lacking to make us fancy that we were on the wharfs at Naples; and in faith, I believe that that edifying theological contest would have ended in that way if the driver had not interposed.

"Let us alone with your Madonnas," he said laughingly to the Beaucairians; "that 's all women's nonsense; men ought not to bother with it."

Thereupon he cracked his whip, with a skeptical expression which brought everybody over to his opinion.

The discussion came to an end, but the baker, having got started, felt that he must spend the rest of his ammunition, and, turning to the unfortunate cap, which sat silent and melancholy in its corner, he said with a bantering expression:

"And how about your wife, knife-grinder—which parish does she favour?"

Evidently there was some very comical allusion in that question, for the whole imperial roared with laughter. The knife-grinder did not laugh. He did not seem to have heard. Observing that, the baker turned to me:

"You don't know his wife, do you, monsieur? She 's a queer kind of a churchwoman! There are n't two like her in Beaucaire."

The laughter redoubled. The knife-grinder did not budge; he simply said in a low tone, without raising his head:

"Hold your tongue, baker."

But that devil of a baker did not propose to hold his tongue, and he continued with greater zest:

"Bless my soul! the fellow is n't to be pitied for having a wife such as she. No man can be bored for an instant with her. Think of it! a beauty who has herself abducted every six months, she always has something to tell you when she comes home. It 's a curious little household, I tell you. Just imagine, monsieur, that they had n't been married a year, when paff! the wife goes off to Spain with a chocolate-peddler. The husband was left alone in his house, to weep and drink. He was like a madman. After some time, the charmer came back to the province dressed as a Spanish woman, with a little tambourine. We all said to her: 'Keep out of his way, or he will kill you.' Kill her! not much! they went to living together again as quietly as you please, and she taught him to play the tambourine."

There was a fresh outburst of laughter. The knife-grinder in his corner muttered again, without raising his head:

"Hold your tongue, baker."

The baker paid no heed, but continued:

"Perhaps you think, monsieur, that after her return from Spain the charmer kept still. Not a bit of it; her husband had taken the thing so well that it made her inclined to try it again. After the Spaniard, it was a military officer, then a boatman on the Rhône, then a musician, then a— I don't know whom. The amusing part of it is that the same comedy is acted every time. The wife goes off, the husband weeps; she returns and he is consoled. And they keep on abducting her, and he keeps on taking her back. Don't you think that the fellow has patience? I must say, however, that the little woman 's mighty pretty—a genuine morsel for a cardinal: dainty, and lively, and well-built; and a white skin, too, and nut-brown eyes that always laugh when she looks at a man. Faith, my Parisian, if you ever pass through Beaucaire——"

"Oh! hold your tongue, baker, I beg you!" said the poor knife-grinder once more, in a heartrending tone.

At that moment the diligence stopped. We were at the farm Des Anglores. The two men from Beaucaire alighted, and I promise you that I did not try to detain them. That wag of a baker! we could hear him laugh after he was in the farmyard.

When they had gone the imperial seemed empty. We had left the man from Camargue at Arles; the driver was walking beside the horses. The knife-grinder and I were alone, each in his corner, saying not a word. It was hot, and the leather of the hood was scorching. At intervals I felt my eyes close and my head become heavy; but it was impossible to sleep. I had always in my ears that "hold your tongue, I beg you," so gentle, yet so heartrending. He did not sleep, either, the poor man; from behind I could see his broad shoulders quivering, and his hand, a long, colourless, stupid hand, tremble on the back of his seat, like the hand of an old man. He was weeping.

"Here you are at home, Parisian," the driver

suddenly called to me; and with the end of his whip he pointed to my green hill with the mill perched upon it like a great butterfly.

I made haste to alight. As I passed the knife-grinder I tried to look under his cap; I was anxious to see his face before leaving him. As if he had understood my thought, the wretched man abruptly raised his head and fastening his eyes upon mine, he said in a hollow voice:

"Look well at me, my friend, and if you hear one of these days that there has been trouble at Beaucaire, you will be able to say that you know the man who did it."

His face was sad and lifeless, with little faded eyes. There were tears in those eyes, but in the voice there was hatred. Hatred is the wrath of the weak! If I were the knife-grinder's wife, I should be on my guard.

Master Cornille's Secret

Master Cornille's Secret

FRANCET MAMAÏ, an old fifer, who comes sometimes to pass the evening with me and drink mulled wine, told me the other evening of a little village drama which my mill witnessed some twenty years ago. The good man's story impressed me, and I propose to try to tell it to you as I heard it.

Imagine for a moment, dear readers, that you are seated before a jar of perfumed wine, and that it is an old fifer who is speaking.

Our province, my dear monsieur, has not always been a dead place, entirely unknown to fame, as it is to-day. Long ago there was a big business done here in grinding grain, and the people from all the farms within a circuit of ten leagues brought us their grain to grind. The hills all around the village were covered with windmills. To right and left

one could see nothing but the sails turning about in the mistral above the pines, long strings of little donkeys laden with bags climbing the hills and stretching out along the roads; and it was pleasant to hear all through the week the cracking of the whips on the hilltops, the creaking of the canvas, and the *Dia hue!* of the millers' men. On Sundays we went to the mills in groups. The millers treated to muscat. The millers' wives were as lovely as queens, with their lace neckerchiefs and their gold crosses. I used to carry my fife, and we danced farandoles till it was pitch-dark. Those mills, you see, were the pleasure and wealth of our province.

Unluckily, some Frenchmen from Paris conceived the idea of setting up a steam flour-mill on the road to Tarascon. Very fine and new it was; the people fell into the habit of sending their grain there, and the poor windmills were left without work. For some time they tried to keep up the struggle, but steam was the stronger, and one after another,

pécaïre! they were all obliged to close. We saw no more strings of little donkeys. The millers' pretty wives sold their gold crosses. No more muscat! no more farandoles! No matter how hard the mistral might blow, the sails did not move. Then, one fine day, the commune ordered all those shanties torn down, and vines and olive-trees were planted where they stood.

But, amid all the distraction, one little mill held out and continued to turn bravely on its hill, in despite of the steam-millers. That was Master Cornille's mill, the same one in which we are passing the evening at this moment.

Master Cornille was an old miller, who had lived for sixty years in flour and was crazy over his trade. The setting up of the steam-mills made him act like a madman. For a week he ran about the village, collecting people round him and shouting at the top of his lungs that they intended to poison Provence with the flour from the steam-mills.

"Don't go there," he would say; "those

villains use steam to make bread, steam, which is an invention of the devil, while I work with the mistral and the tramontana, which are the breath of the good Lord"; and he would spout a lot of fine words in praise of windmills, but no one listened to them.

Then, in a towering rage, the old man shut himself up in his mill, and lived alone like a wild beast. He would n't even keep with him his granddaughter Vivette, a child of fifteen, who since the death of her parents had no one but her grandfather in the world. The poor child was obliged to earn her living and to hire herself out among the farms for the harvest, the silkworm season, or the olive picking. And yet her grandfather seemed to love the child dearly. He often travelled four leagues on foot in the heat of the sun to see her at the farm where she was working, and when he was with her, he would pass hours at a time gazing at her and weeping.

In the province, people thought that the old miller had been led by avarice to send Vivette

away; and it did not do him credit to allow his grandchild to travel about that way from one farm to another, exposed to the brutality of the labourers and to all the trials of young women in service. People thought it very wrong, too, that a man of Master Cornille's reputation, who up to that time had shown the greatest self-respect, should go about through the streets like a regular gypsy, barefooted, with a cap all holes and a blouse all in rags. The fact is that on Sunday, when we saw him come in to mass, we were ashamed for him, we old men; and Cornille felt it so keenly that he did n't dare to come and sit in the warden's pew; he always remained at the back of the church, near the holy-water vessel, with the poor.

There was something in Master Cornille's life we could n't understand. For a long time no one in the village had carried him any grain, and yet the sails of his windmill were always in motion as before. In the evening, people met the old miller on the roads driving

before him his donkey loaded with fat bags of flour.

"Good evening, Master Cornille," the peasants would call out to him; "is business still good?"

"Still good, my children," the old man would reply, with a jovial air. "Thank God, we have no lack of work."

Then, if any one asked where in the devil so much work could come from, he would put a finger to his lips and answer gravely:

"Hush! I am working for exportation."

No one could ever get anything more from him.

As for putting one's nose inside his mill, it was n't to be thought of. Even little Vivette herself never went in there.

When people passed in front of it, they always found the door closed, the huge sails moving, the old ass browsing on the platform, and a great thin cat taking a sun-bath on the window-sill, and glaring at them with a wicked expression.

All this smelt of mystery, and made people talk a great deal. Every one had his own explanation of Master Cornille's secret, but the general report was that there were even more bags of silver in the mill than bags of grain.

After a while, however, everything came to light; this is how it happened:

One fine day, as I was playing on my fife for the young people to dance, I noticed that my eldest boy and little Vivette had fallen in love with each other. At heart I was not displeased, because after all the name of Cornille was held in honour among us, and then it would have pleased me to see that pretty little bird of a Vivette trotting about my house. But as our lovers had often had opportunities to be together, I determined, for fear of accidents, to settle the business at once, and I went up to the mill to say a word to the grandfather. Ah! the old sorcerer! you should have seen how he received me! It was impossible for me to induce him to open his

door. I explained my reasons after a fashion, through the keyhole; and all the time I was talking, there was that lean villain of a cat snorting like a devil over my head.

The old man did n't give me time to finish, but shouted to me most impolitely to go back to my fife; that if I was in such a hurry to marry my boy, I could go and look for a girl at the steam-mill. As you can imagine, the blood went to my head when I heard such rough talk; but I was wise enough to restrain myself, and leaving the old fool in his mill, I returned to inform the children of my discomfiture. The poor lambs could n't believe it; they asked me as a favour to allow them to go up together to the mill and speak to the grandfather. I had n't the courage to refuse, and off my lovers went.

Just as they reached the mill, Master Cornille had gone out. The door was securely locked; but the old fellow, when he went away, had left his ladder outside, and suddenly it occurred to the children to go in by the window and

see what there might be inside that famous mill.

What a strange thing! the main room of the mill was empty. Not a sack, not a particle of grain; not the slightest trace of flour on the walls or on the spider-webs. They could n't even smell that pleasant, warm odour of ground wheat that makes the air of a mill so fragrant. The shaft was covered with dust and the huge thin cat was sleeping on it.

The lower room had the same aspect of poverty and neglect: a wretched bed, a few rags, a crust of bread on one stair, and in a corner three or four bursted sacks, with rubbish and plaster sticking out.

That was Master Cornille's secret! it was that plaster that he paraded at night on the roads, to save the honour of the mill and to make people think that he made flour there. Poor mill! poor Cornille! Long ago the steam-millers had robbed them of their last customer. The sails still turned, but the mill ground nothing.

The children returned to me all in tears and told me what they had seen. It tore my heart to listen to them. Without a moment's loss of time I ran to the neighbours; I told them the story in two words, and we agreed instantly that we must carry to Cornille's mill all the wheat there was in the houses. No sooner said than done. The whole village started off, and we arrived at the top of the hill with a procession of donkeys loaded with grain, and real grain, too!

The mill was wide-open. In front of the door Master Cornille sat on a bag of plaster, weeping, with his face in his hands. He had discovered on returning home that during his absence some one had entered his mill and discovered his sad secret.

"Poor me!" he said. "Now there 's nothing left for me to do but to die. The mill is dishonoured."

And he sobbed as if his heart would break, calling his mill by all sorts of names, speaking to it as if it was a living person.

At that moment the donkeys arrived on the platform and we all began to shout as we did in the palmy days of the millers:

"Holla! mill there! holla! Master Cornille!"

And the bags were piled up before the door and the fine red grain strewed the earth in all directions.

Master Cornille stared with all his eyes. He took up some grain in the hollow of his old hand, and said, laughing and weeping at once:

"It is grain! Lord God! real grain! Leave me; let me look at it."

Then, turning to us:

"Ah! I knew that you 'd come back to me. All those steam-millers are thieves."

We proposed to carry him in triumph to the village.

"No, no, my children," he said; "first of all I must give my mill something to eat. Just think! it 's so long since he has had anything between his teeth!"

And it brought the tears to the eyes of us all to see the poor old man rush about to right

and left, emptying the sacks, looking after the millstone, while the grain was crushed and the fine wheaten dust rose to the ceiling.

I must do our people justice: from that day we never allowed the old miller to lack work. Then one morning Master Cornille died, and the sails of our last mill ceased to turn—this time forever. When Cornille was dead, no one followed in his footsteps. What can you expect, monsieur? Everything has an end in this world, and we must believe that the day of windmills has passed, like that of barges on the Rhône, parliaments, and jackets with big flowers.

The Goat of Monsieur Seguin

The Goat of Monsieur Seguin

To M. Pierre Gringoire, Lyrical Poet at Paris

YOU will always be the same, my poor Gringoire!

Think of it! you are offered the place of reporter on a respectable Paris newspaper, and you have the assurance to refuse! Why, look at yourself, unhappy youth! look at that worn-out doublet, those dilapidated breeches, that gaunt face, which cries aloud that it is hungry. And this is where your passion for rhyme has brought you! this is the result of your ten years of loyal service among the pages of my lord Apollo! Are n't you ashamed, finally?

Be a reporter, you idiot; be a reporter! You will earn honest crowns, you will have your special seat at Brébant's, and you will be

able to appear every first night with a new feather in your cap.

No? You will not? You propose to remain perfectly free to the end? Well! just listen to the story of Monsieur Seguin's goat. You will see what one gains by attempting to remain free.

Monsieur Seguin had never had good luck with his goats. He lost them all in the same way; some fine morning they broke their cord and went off to the mountain, and there the wolf ate them. Neither their master's petting, nor fear of the wolf, nor anything else deterred them. They were, it would seem, independent goats, determined to have fresh air and liberty at any price.

Honest Monsieur Seguin, who was unable to understand the temperament of his beasts, was dismayed. He said:

"I am done; the goats are bored at my house, and I won't keep another one."

However, he did not get discouraged, and

after losing six goats all in the same way, he bought a seventh; but that time he was very careful to buy a very young one, so that it would be more likely to become accustomed to living with him.

Ah! Monsieur Seguin's little kid was such a pretty thing, Gringoire! with her soft eyes, her little beard like a subaltern's, her gleaming black hoofs, her striped horns, and her long white hair, which formed a sort of greatcoat! She was almost as lovely as Esmeralda's goat — do you remember, Gringoire? And then, so docile, too, and affectionate, allowing herself to be milked without moving, without putting her foot into the pail. A perfect little love of a kid!

Monsieur Seguin had an enclosure behind his house, surrounded by hawthorn. There he placed his new boarder. He fastened her to a stake, in the place where the grass was the richest, taking care to give her a long rope; and from time to time he went to see if she was all right. The kid was very happy and

browsed with such zest that Monsieur Seguin was overjoyed.

"At last," thought the poor man, "I have one that will not be bored here!"

Monsieur Seguin was mistaken; his kid was bored.

One day she said to herself, looking up at the mountain:

"How happy they must be up there! what pleasure to gambol about in the heather, without this infernal cord that galls one's neck! It is all right for the donkey or the ox to graze in an enclosed place, but goats need plenty of room."

From that moment, the grass in the enclosure seemed distasteful. Ennui assailed the kid. She grew thin, her milk became scanty. It was painful to see her pulling at her cord all day long, with her head turned towards the mountain, her nostrils dilated, and bleating sadly.

Monsieur Seguin noticed that something was the matter with the kid, but he did not know

what it was. One morning as he finished milking her, the kid turned her head and said to him in her dialect:

"Listen, Monsieur Seguin; I am dying in your enclosure; let me go to the mountain."

"Ah! *mon Dieu!* this one, too!" cried Monsieur Seguin in stupefaction; and the shock caused him to drop his pail; then, seating himself on the grass beside his kid, he said:

"What, Blanquette, do you want to leave me?"

And Blanquette replied:

"Yes, Monsieur Seguin."

"Have n't you enough grass here?"

"Oh, yes! Monsieur Seguin."

"Perhaps you are tied too short; do you want me to lengthen the rope?"

"It is n't worth while, Monsieur Seguin."

"What is it that you want, then?"

"I want to go to the mountain, Monsieur Seguin."

"Why, you wretched creature, don't you

know that there is a wolf in the mountain? What will you do when he comes?"

"I will butt him with my horns, Monsieur Seguin."

"The wolf does n't care for your horns. He has eaten goats with horns much longer than yours. Don't you remember poor Renaude who was here last year? A fine goat, as strong and ill-tempered as any he-goat. She fought with the wolf all night, and then in the morning the wolf ate her."

"*Pécaïre!* poor Renaude! but that does n't make any difference to me, Monsieur Seguin; let me go to the mountain."

"Divine mercy!" exclaimed Monsieur Seguin; "what on earth does somebody do to my goats? Still another one that the wolf will end by eating! But no! I will save you in spite of yourself, you hussy! and as I am afraid that you will break your rope, I am going to shut you up in the stable, and you shall always stay there."

Thereupon Monsieur Seguin carried the kid

to a dark stable, the door of which he locked securely. Unluckily he forgot the window, and he no sooner had his back turned than the little creature took her leave.

Do you laugh, Gringoire? Parbleu! of course you do; you are of the faction of the goats, against poor Monsieur Seguin. We will see if you laugh in a moment.

When the white kid arrived in the mountain there was general rejoicing. Never had any of the old fir-trees seen anything so pretty. They welcomed her like a little queen. The chestnuts bent to the ground to caress her with their branches. The golden heather opened for her to pass, and gave forth the sweetest perfume that it could. The whole mountain celebrated her arrival.

You can imagine, Gringoire, whether our kid was happy! No more ropes, no more stakes, nothing to prevent her from gambling and grazing at her pleasure. That was the place where the grass grew! above the tips of her horns, my dear fellow! And such

grass! fine and sweet, made up of a thousand different plants. It was a very different thing from the grass in the enclosure. And the flowers — great blue bellflowers, purple foxgloves with long stamens, a whole forest of wild flowers, overflowing with intoxicating juices.

The white kid, half tipsy, played about there with her legs in the air, and rolled down the slopes, with the falling leaves and the chestnuts; then, of a sudden, she sprang to her feet with one leap. Away she went, with her head thrust forward, through the underbrush and the thickets, sometimes on a peak, sometimes in the bottom of a ravine, up and down and everywhere. You would have said that there were ten of Monsieur Seguin's kids in the mountain.

The fact is that Blanquette was afraid of nothing. She crossed with one bound broad torrents which spattered her, as she passed, with misty spray and foam. Then, dripping wet, she stretched herself out on a flat rock

and allowed the sun to dry her. Once, as she crept to the edge of a plateau with some clover in her teeth, she spied below her, in the plain, Monsieur Seguin's house with the enclosure behind it. That made her laugh until she cried.

"How tiny it is!" she said; "how was I ever able to live there?"

Poor dear! finding herself perched up there so high, she believed herself to be at least as large as the world.

In fact that was a great day for Monsieur Seguin's kid. About midday, as she ran to right and left, she happened upon a band of chamois which were busily engaged in eating wild grapes. Our little white-robed vagrant created a sensation. They gave her the best place at the vine, and those gentlemen were all very gallant. Indeed it seems — this between ourselves, Gringoire — that a young chamois with a black coat had the good fortune to please Blanquette. The two lovers lost themselves in the woods for an hour or

two, and if you would know what they said to each other, go ask the chattering streams that flow invisibly under the moss.

Suddenly the wind freshened. The mountain turned purple; it was evening.

"Already!" said the little kid; and she stopped, much surprised.

The fields below were drowned in mist. Monsieur Seguin's enclosure disappeared in the haze, and of the cottage she could see only the roof, with a thread of smoke. She listened to the bells of a flock being driven home, and her heart was heavy. A falcon, flying homeward, brushed her with his wings as he passed. She started. Then there arose a howl in the mountain:

"Hou! hou!"

She thought of the wolf; during the day the wild creature had not given him a thought. At the same moment a horn blew in the valley. It was good Monsieur Seguin making a last effort.

"Hou! hou!" howled the wolf.

"Come back! come back!" cried the horn.

Blanquette longed to go back; but when she remembered the stake, the rope, and the hedge about the enclosure, she thought that she could never again become accustomed to that life, and that it was better to stay where she was.

The horn ceased to blow.

The kid heard a rustling of leaves behind her. She turned and saw in the darkness two short, straight ears and two gleaming eyes. It was the wolf.

He sat there on his haunches, enormous, motionless, gazing at the little white kid and licking his chops in anticipation. As he felt sure that he should eat her, the wolf was in no hurry; but when she turned, he began to laugh wickedly.

"Ha! ha!" Monsieur Seguin's little kid!" and he passed his great red tongue over his lean chops.

Blanquette felt that she was lost. For a

moment, as she remembered the story of old Renaude, who had fought all night only to be eaten in the morning, she thought that it would be better to be eaten then; then, thinking better of it, she stood on guard, her head down and her horns forward, like the brave Seguin goat that she was. Not that she had any hope of killing the wolf,— kids do not kill wolves — but simply to see if she could hold out as long as Renaude.

Thereupon the monster came forward and the little horns began to play.

Ah! the dear little kid, how courageously she went at it! More than ten times — I am not lying, Gringoire — she compelled the wolf to retreat in order to take breath. During these momentary respites, the little glutton hastily plucked another blade of her dear grass; then she returned to the battle with her mouth full. This lasted all night. From time to time Monsieur Seguin's kid glanced at the stars dancing in the clear sky and said to herself:

"Oh! if only I can hold out until dawn!"

One after another the stars went out. Blanquette fought with redoubled fury with her horns, the wolf with his teeth. A pale gleam appeared on the horizon. The hoarse crowing of a cock came up from a farm.

"At last!" said the poor creature, who was only awaiting the dawn to die; and she lay down in her lovely white coat all spotted with blood.

Thereupon the wolf threw himself upon the little kid and ate her.

Adieu, Gringoire!

The story you have heard is not a fable of my invention. If ever you come to Provence our farmers will often speak to you of "the goat of Monsieur Seguin, that fought the wolf all night, and then, in the morning, the wolf ate her up."

You understand, Gringoire :

"And then, in the morning, the wolf ate her up."

The Pope's Mule

The Pope's Mule

OF all the clever sayings, proverbs, or saws with which our Provence peasants embellish their discourse, I know of none more picturesque or more peculiar than this. Within a radius of fifteen leagues of my mill, when anybody mentions a spiteful, vindictive man, he will say: "Look out for that man! he is like the Pope's mule, that keeps her kick for seven years."

I tried for a long time to find out the source of that proverb, what that Papal mule might be, and that kick kept for seven years. No one here was able to give me any information on that subject, not even Francet Mamaï, my fife-player, who, however, has the whole legendary history of Provence at his finger-ends. Francet agrees with me that there is probably some old tradition of Provence behind it; but

he has never heard it mentioned except in the proverb.

"You won't find that anywhere except in the Grasshoppers' Library," said the old fifer, with a laugh.

I thought the suggestion a good one, and as the Grasshoppers' Library is right at my door, I shut myself up there for a week.

It is a wonderful library, splendidly stocked, open to poets day and night, the attendants being little librarians with cymbals, who play for you all the time. I passed some delightful days there, and after a week of investigation—on my back—I ended by discovering what I wanted to know, that is to say, the story of my mule and of that famous kick stored up for seven years. The tale is a pretty one, although slightly ingenuous, and I am going to try to tell it to you as I read it yesterday morning in a manuscript of the colour of the weather, which had a pleasant smell of dry lavender, with long gossamer-threads for book-marks.

The Pope's Mule

He who never saw Avignon in the time of the Popes has seen nothing. Never was there such a city for gayety, life, animation, and a succession of fêtes. There were, from morning till night, processions, pilgrimages, streets strewn with flowers and carpeted with magnificent tapestries, cardinals arriving by the Rhône, with banners flying; gayly bedecked galleys, the soldiers of the Pope singing in Latin on the squares, and the bowls of mendicant friars; and then, from roof to cellar of the houses that crowded humming about the great Papal palace, like bees about their hive, there was the tick-tack of the lace-makers' looms, the rapid movement of the shuttles weaving gold thread for the vestments, the little hammers of the carvers of burettes, the keyboards being tuned at the lute-makers', the songs of the sempstresses; and, overhead, the clang of the bells, and always a tambourine or two jingling down by the bridge. For with us, when the common people are pleased, they must dance and dance; and as the streets in

the city in those days were too narrow for the farandole, the fifes and the tambourines stationed themselves on Avignon Bridge, in the cool breezes from the Rhône; and there the people danced and danced, day and night. Ah! the happy days! the happy city! Halberds that did not wound, state prisons where they put wine to cool. No famine; no wars. That is how the Popes of the Comtat governed the people; that is why the people regretted them so bitterly.

There was one especially, a good old fellow, whom they called Boniface. Ah! how many tears were shed in Avignon when he died! He was such a good-natured, affable prince! He laughed so heartily from the back of his mule! And when you passed him—though you were simply a poor little digger of madder, or the provost of the city—he would give you his blessing so courteously! He was a genuine Pope of Yvetot, but of a Provençal Yvetot, with a something shrewd in his laugh-

ter, a sprig of marjoram in his biretta, and never a sign of a Jeanneton. The only Jeanneton that the old man had ever been known to have was his vineyard, a tiny vineyard which he had planted himself, three leagues from Avignon, among the myrtles of Château Neuf.

Every Sunday, after vespers, the excellent man went to pay court to it; and when he was there, seated in the warm sun, with his mule by his side and his cardinals lying at the foot of the stumps all about, then he would order a bottle of native wine opened,— that fine, ruby-coloured wine which was called afterwards the Château Neuf of the Popes,— and he would drink it in little sips, looking at his vineyard with a tender expression. Then, when the bottle was empty and the day drew to a close, he would return merrily to the city, followed by all his chapter; and when he rode over Avignon Bridge, through the drums and farandoles, his mule, stirred by the music, would fall into a little skipping amble, while he himself marked the time of

the dance with his cap, which scandalised his cardinals terribly, but caused the people to say: "Ah! the kind prince! ah! the dear old Pope!"

Next to his vineyard at Château Neuf, the thing that the Pope loved best on earth was his mule. The good man fairly doted on the beast. Every night, before going to bed, he would go to see if his stable was securely fastened, if anything was lacking in the crib; and he never rose from the table until a huge bowl of wine *à la Française,* with plenty of sugar and spices, had been prepared under his own eye, which he carried to the mule himself, despite the comments of his cardinals. It should be said, too, that the beast was worth the trouble. It was a fine black mule, dappled with red, sure-footed, with a glossy coat, a broad, full rump; and she carried proudly her slender little head, all bedecked with plumes, and ribbons, and silver bells and streamers; and as gentle as an angel withal, with a mild

eye and two long ears always in motion, which gave her a most amiable aspect. All Avignon respected her, and when she passed through the streets there was no attention which the people did not pay her; for they all knew that that was the best way to be in favour at court, and that, with her innocent look, the Pope's mule had led more than one to wealth; witness Tistet Védène and his wonderful adventures.

This Tistet Védène was in truth an impudent rascal, whom his father, Guy Védène, the gold-carver, had been obliged to turn out of his house, because he refused to do any work and led the apprentices astray. For six months he was seen dragging his jacket through all the gutters of Avignon, but principally in the neighbourhood of the Papal palace; for the rogue had had for a long while a scheme of his own about the Pope's mule, and you will see what a mischievous scheme it was.

One day, when his Holiness all alone was

riding by the ramparts on his steed, behold my Tistet approaches him, and says, clasping his hands with an air of admiration:

"Ah! *mon Dieu!* what a fine mule you have, Holy Father! Just let me look at her. Ah! what a lovely mule, my Pope! the Emperor of Germany has not her like."

And he patted her and spoke softly to her, as to a maiden:

"Come, my jewel, my treasure, my pearl."

And the excellent Pope, deeply moved, said to himself:

"What a nice little fellow! How nice he is with my mule!"

And what do you suppose happened the next day? Tistet Védène exchanged his old yellow jacket for a fine lace alb, a violet silk hood, and shoes with buckles; and he entered the household of the Pope, to which only sons of nobles and nephews of cardinals had ever been admitted. That is what intrigue leads to! But Tistet Védène did not stop there.

Once in the Pope's service, the rascal continued the game that had succeeded so well. Insolent with everybody else, he reserved his attention and care for the mule alone; and he was always to be seen in the courtyard of the palace, with a handful of oats or a bunch of clover, whose purple clusters he shook as he glanced at the Holy Father's balcony, as if he would say: "Look! for whom is this?" The result was that the excellent Pope finally, feeling that he was growing old, left it to him to look after the stable and to carry the mule her bowl of wine *à la Française;* which did not make the cardinals laugh.

Nor the mule either—it did not make her laugh. Now, when the time for her wine arrived, she always saw five or six little clerks of the household enter her stable and hastily bury themselves in the straw with their hoods and their lace; then, after a moment, a delicious odour of caramel and spices filled the stable, and Tistet Védène appeared,

carefully carrying the bowl of wine *à la Française.* Then the poor beast's martyrdom began.

That perfumed wine which she loved so dearly, which kept her warm, which gave her wings, they had the fiendish cruelty to bring to her manger, to let her inhale it, and then, when her nostrils were full of it, off it went! the beautiful rose-coloured liquor disappeared down the throats of those young rogues. And if they had only contented themselves with stealing her wine! but all those little clerks were like devils when they had been drinking. One pulled her ears, another her tail; Quiquet mounted her back, Béluguet tried his cap on her head, and not one of the scamps reflected that with a sudden kick the excellent beast could have sent them all into the polar star, or even farther. But no! not for nothing is one the Pope's mule, the mule of benedictions and indulgences. Let the boys do what they would, she did not lose her temper, and she bore a grudge to

Tistet Védène alone. But he—when she felt him behind her, her hoofs fairly itched, and in good sooth there was reason for it. That ne'er-do-well of a Tistet played her such cruel tricks! He conceived such fiendish ideas after drinking!

Would you believe that one day he took it into his head to make her go up with him into the belfry, way up to the highest point of the palace! And this that I am telling you is not a fable — two hundred thousand Provençals saw it. Just imagine the terror of that wretched beast, when, after twisting blindly about for an hour on a winding staircase, and climbing I know not how many stairs, she suddenly found herself on a platform dazzling with light; and a thousand feet below her, a whole fantastic Avignon, the stalls in the market no larger than walnuts, the Pope's soldiers in front of their barracks like red ants, and yonder, over a silver thread, a little microscopic bridge where the people danced and danced. Ah! the poor creature! what a

panic! All the windows in the palace shook with the bray that she uttered.

"What's the matter? What are they doing to her?" cried the good Pope, rushing out upon the balcony.

"Ah! Holy Father, this is what's the matter! Your mule—*mon Dieu!* what will become of us!—your mule has gone up into the belfry."

"All alone?"

"Yes, Holy Father, all alone. See! look up there. Don't you see the ends of her ears hanging over, like two swallows!"

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed the poor Pope, raising his eyes. "Why, she must have gone mad! Why, she will kill herself! Will you come down here, you wretched creature?"

Pécaïre! She would have asked nothing better than to have come down; but how? As to the staircase, that was not to be thought of; it is possible to go up such things; but in going down there is a chance to break one's

legs a hundred times. And the poor mule was in despair; as she wandered about the platform with her great eyes filled with vertigo, she thought of Tistet Védène.

"Ah! You villain, if I escape, what a kick to-morrow morning!"

That idea of a kick restored a little of her courage; save for that, she could not have held out. At last they succeeded in taking her down; but it was a difficult task. They had to lower her in a litter, with ropes and a jack-screw. And you can imagine what a humiliation it was for the Pope's mule to be suspended at that height, swinging about with her hoofs in the air, like a butterfly at the end of a string. And all Avignon looking at her!

The wretched beast did not sleep that night. It seemed to her all the time that she was walking about on that infernal platform, with the city laughing below her; then she thought of that infamous Tistet Védène, and of the dainty kick that she proposed to give him in

the morning. Ah! my friends, what a kick! they would see the smoke at Pampérigouste.

Now, while this pleasant reception was in store for him at the stable, what do you suppose Tistet Védène was doing? He was going down the Rhône, singing, on one of the Pope's galleys, on his way to the Court of Naples, with a party of young nobles whom the city sent every year to Queen Joanna, for training in diplomacy and in refined manners. Tistet was not of noble birth; but the Pope desired to reward him for the care he had bestowed upon his mule, and above all for the activity he had displayed during the day of rescue.

Imagine the mule's disappointment the next morning!

"Ah! the villain! he suspected something!" she thought, as she shook her bells savagely; "but never mind, you scoundrel! you shall have it when you come back, that kick of yours; I will keep it for you!"

And she did keep it for him.

After Tistet's departure, the mule resumed

her quiet mode of life and her former habits. No more Quiquet or Béluguet in her stable. The blissful days of wine *à la Française* had returned, and with them good humour, the long siestas, and the little dancing step when she crossed Avignon Bridge. Since her misfortune, however, she was always treated rather coldly in the city. People whispered together as she passed; the old folks shook their heads, and the children laughed as they pointed to the belfry. Even the worthy Pope himself had not his former confidence in his friend, and when he allowed himself to take a little nap on her back, on Sundays, when he returned from his vineyard, he always had this thought: "Suppose I should wake up on the platform up there!"

The mule saw that and she was unhappy over it, although she said nothing; but when the name of Tistet Védène was mentioned in her presence, her long ears quivered, and with a short laugh she would sharpen the iron of her little shoes on the pavement.

Seven years passed thus; and then, at the end of those seven years, Tistet Védène returned from the Court of Naples. His time there was not at an end; but he had learned that the Pope's chief mustard-bearer had died suddenly at Avignon, and as the office seemed to him a good one, he returned in great haste to apply for it.

When that schemer of a Védène entered the great hall of the palace, the Holy Father had difficulty in recognising him, he had grown so tall and so stout. It should be said also that the Pope had grown old too, and that he could not see well without spectacles.

Tistet was not frightened.

"What? don't you recognise me, Holy Father? It is Tistet Védène."

"Védène?"

"Why yes, you know, the one who used to carry the French wine to your mule."

"Oh, yes! I remember. A good little fellow, that Tistet Védène! And what does he want of us now?"

"Oh! a mere nothing, Holy Father. I came to ask you — by the way — have you still your mule? And is she well? Good! — I came to ask you for the place of the chief mustard-bearer, who has just died."

"You, chief mustard-bearer! why, you are too young. How old are you?"

"Twenty years and two months, illustrious pontiff: just five years older than your mule. Ah! blessed palm of God! the excellent beast! If you only knew how I loved that mule! how I sighed for her in Italy! — Won't you let me see her?"

"Yes, my child, you shall see her," said the kind-hearted Pope, deeply touched. "And as you are so fond of the excellent beast, I propose that you shall live near her. From this day, I attach you to my person as chief mustard-bearer. My cardinals will make an outcry, but so much the worse! I am used to it. Come to us to-morrow, when vespers is done, and we will deliver the symbols of your office, in the presence of our chapter.

and then—I will take you to see the mule, and you shall come to the vineyard with us both. Ha! ha!—Now go!"

If Tistet Védène was pleased when he left the great hall, I need not tell you how impatiently he awaited the ceremony of the morrow. Meanwhile, there was some one in the palace still happier than he and even more impatient; that was the mule. From the hour of Védène's return until vespers of the following day, the bloodthirsty creature did not cease stuffing herself with oats, and kicking at the wall with her hind feet. She, too, was preparing for the ceremony.

On the morrow, then, when vespers was at an end, Tistet Védène entered the courtyard of the Papal palace. All the high clergy were there, the cardinals in their red robes, the advocate of the devil in black velvet, the convent abbés with their little mitres, the churchwardens of the Saint-Agrico, the violet hoods of the household, the lower clergy too, the Pope's soldiers in full uniform,

the three brotherhoods of penitents, the hermits from Mount Ventoux with their fierce eyes, and the little clerk who walks behind them carrying the bell, the Flagellants naked to the waist, the red-faced sacristans in gowns like judges — all, yes, all, even to those who hand the holy-water, and he who lights and he who extinguishes the candles; not one was missing. Ah! it was a grand installation! Bells, fireworks, sunlight, music, and, as always, those mad tambourine-players leading the dance yonder on Avignon Bridge.

When Védène appeared in the midst of the assemblage, his presence and his handsome face aroused a murmur of admiration. He was a magnificent Provençal, of the blond type, with long hair curled at the ends and a small, unruly beard which resembled the shavings of fine metal from the graving-tool of his father the goldsmith. The report was current that the fingers of Queen Joanna had sometimes toyed with that light beard; and Sire de Védène had in truth the vainglorious air

and the distraught expression of men whom queens have loved. That day, to do honour to his nation, he had replaced his Neapolitan clothes by a jacket with a pink border *à la Provençale*, and in his hood floated a long plume of the Camargue ibis.

Immediately upon his entrance, the chief mustard-bearer bowed with a noble air, and walked toward the high dais, where the Pope awaited him, to deliver the symbols of his office: the spoon of yellow wood and the saffron-coloured coat. The mule was at the foot of the staircase, all saddled and ready to start for the vineyard. When he passed her, Tistet Védène smiled affably and stopped to pat her two or three times in a friendly way on the back, looking out of the corner of his eye to see if the Pope noticed him. The position was excellent. The mule let fly:

"There! take that, you villain! For seven years I have been keeping it for you!"

And she gave him a terrible kick, so terrible that the smoke of it was seen from far Pam-

périgouste, an eddying cloud of blond smoke in which fluttered an ibis-feather — all that remained of the ill-fated Tistet Védène!

A mule's kick is not ordinarily so disastrous; but she was a Papal mule; and then, think of it! she had kept it for him for seven years. There is no finer example of an ecclesiastical grudge.

The Lighthouse of the Sanguinaires

The Lighthouse of the Sanguinaires

LAST night I was unable to sleep. The mistral was in angry mood, and the outbursts of its loud voice kept me awake until morning. The whole mill creaked, heavily swaying its mutilated sails, which whistled in the wind like the rigging of a ship. Tiles flew from its dilapidated roof. In the distance the pines with which the hill is covered waved to and fro and rustled in the darkness. One might have fancied oneself at sea.

It reminded me perfectly of my notable insomnia three years ago, when I was living at the lighthouse on the Sanguinaires — on the Corsican coast at the mouth of the Bay of Ajaccio.

Another charming little corner that, which I had found, to dream, and to be alone.

Alphonse Daudet

Imagine an island of a reddish colour and of uncivilised aspect; the lighthouse at one end, at the other an old Genoese tower, where an eagle lived in my day. Below, at the water's edge, a ruined lazaretto, overgrown everywhere by weeds; and then, ravines, *maquis,* high cliffs, a few wild goats, and small Corsican horses gamboling about with flying manes; and lastly, high in the air, amid a whirlwind of sea-birds, the lighthouse with its platform of white masonry, where the keepers walked to and fro, the green door with its arched top, the little cast-iron tower, and above, the huge lantern flashing in the sunlight and giving light even during the day. Such was the island of the Sanguinaires as I saw it again last night while I listened to the roaring of my pines. It was to that enchanted isle that I used sometimes to retire, when I longed for fresh air and solitude, before I owned a mill.

What did I do there? What I do here, or even less. When the mistral or the tramon-

tana did not blow too hard, I would seat myself between two rocks at the water's edge, amid the gulls, and blackbirds, and swallows, and I would stay there almost all day in that sort of stupor and delicious prostration which are born of gazing at the sea. You know, do you not, that pleasant intoxication of the mind? You do not think; nor do you dream. Your whole being escapes you, flies away — is scattered about. You are the gull that plunges into the sea, the spray that floats in the sunlight between two waves — the white smoke of yonder steamer rapidly disappearing, that little coral boat with the red sail, that drop of water, that fleck of mist — anything except yourself. Oh! how many hours of half-slumber and of mental dispersion have I passed on my island!

On the days when the wind was high, the shore no longer being tenable, I would shut myself up in the courtyard of the lazaretto, a small, melancholy courtyard, fragrant with rosemary and wild absinthium; and there,

sheltered behind a fragment of the old wall, I would allow myself to be gently overcome by the vague perfume of neglect and sadness which floated about with the sunlight in the stone cells, open on all sides like ancient tombs. From time to time, the closing of a gate, a light leap in the grass—it was a goat coming to browse, out of the wind. On seeing me, she would stop in alarm, and stand there before me, sharp-eyed, with her horns in the air, looking down on me with a childlike expression.

About five o'clock, the speaking-trumpet of the keepers summoned me to dinner. Then I would take a narrow path through the *maquis,* rising almost perpendicularly from the sea, and I would return slowly to the lighthouse, turning at every step to gaze at the boundless horizon of water and of light, which seemed to expand as I went higher.

Above it was delightful. I can still see that pleasant dining-room with its floor of broad

flags, with its oaken wainscoting, the *bouillabaisse* smoking in the centre, the door wide-open on the white terrace, and the setting sun streaming in. The keepers were always there, awaiting my arrival to sit down to dinner. There were three of them, a Marseillais and two Corsicans, all short and bearded, with the same tanned and wrinkled faces and the same goatskin caps; but entirely different in manner and in mood.

The ways of life of these men betrayed at once the difference between the two races. The Marseillais, active and industrious, always full of business, always in motion, ran about the island from morning till night, gardening, fishing, collecting gull's-eggs, lying in wait in the *maquis* to milk a goat on the wing; and always some *aioli* or stew in process of manufacture.

The Corsicans, on the other hand, did absolutely nothing outside their duties as keepers; they looked upon themselves as functionaries, and passed the whole of every day in the

kitchen, playing endless games of *scopa*, pausing only to light their pipes with a solemn air, and to cut with scissors, in the hollow of their hand, the huge leaves of green tobacco.

For the rest, Marseillais and Corsicans alike were honest, simple, artless fellows, full of attentions for their guest, although after all he must have seemed to them a most extraordinary personage.

Think of it! the idea of shutting oneself up in a lighthouse for pleasure! And they found the days so long, and were so happy when it was their turn to go ashore. In the summer, that great happiness happened once a month. Ten days ashore for every thirty days at the light, that is the rule; but in winter there is stormy weather, and the rules do not hold. The wind blows, the sea rises, the Sanguinaires are white with foam, and the keepers on duty are blockaded two or three months in succession, and sometimes under terrible circumstances.

Lighthouse of the Sanguinaires

"This is what happened to me, monsieur," said old Bartoli one day while we were eating dinner,—"this is what happened to me five years ago, at this very table that we are sitting at, one winter's night, as it is now. That night, there was only two of us in the light, a man named Tchéco and myself. The others were ashore, sick or on leave, I forget which now. We were finishing our dinner as quietly as possible. All of a sudden my comrade stops eating, looks at me a minute with a funny expression, and pouf! down he falls on the table with his arms out. I go to him, and shake him, and call him:

"'I say, Tché! O Tché!'

"Not a word! He was dead. You can imagine my state. I sat there more than an hour, dazed and trembling beside that corpse, and then all of a sudden the thought came to me: 'And the light!' I had just time to go up into the lantern and light it. It was dark already. Such a night, monsieur! the sea and the wind did n't have their natural voices.

Every minute it seemed to me as if somebody was calling to me on the stairs. And with it all, such a fever and such a thirst! But you could n't have induced me to go down; I was too much afraid of death. However, at daybreak my courage came back a little. I put my comrade on his bed, with a sheet over him, then I said a bit of a prayer and set the alarm signal. Unluckily the sea was too high; it did n't make any difference how much I signalled, nobody came. And there I was alone in the lighthouse with my poor Tché, and God only knows how long. I hoped I could keep him with me till the boat came; but after three days, it was n't possible. What was I to do? Carry him outside? Bury him? The rock was too hard, and there 's so many crows on the island. It was a pity to abandon that good Tchéco to them. Then it occurred to me to take him down to one of the cells in the lazaretto. That sad task took me a whole afternoon, and I tell you it took courage.

Look you, monsieur, even to-day, when I go down to that part of the island on a windy afternoon, it seems to me as if I had the dead man still on my shoulders."

Poor old Bartoli; the sweat rolled down his cheeks, just from thinking of it.

Our meals passed in this way, with plenty of conversation: the lighthouse, the sea, stories of shipwreck and of Corsican bandits. Then, at nightfall, the keeper who had the first watch lighted his little lamp, took his pipe, his drinking-cup, a huge volume of Plutarch with red edges — the whole library of the Sanguinaires — and disappeared. A moment later, there was throughout the house a rattling of chains and pulleys and great clock weights being wound up.

During that time, I sat outside on the terrace. The sun, already very low, sank more and more quickly towards the water, dragging the whole horizon after it. The wind freshened, the island turned purple.

In the sky, close to me, a great bird flew heavily by: it was the eagle from the Genoese tower returning home. Little by little the mist rose from the sea. Soon one could see only the white rim of foam around the island. Suddenly, over my head, a great flood of soft light gushed forth. The lantern was lighted. Leaving the whole island in shadow, the clear light fell upon the sea, and I sat there lost in darkness, beneath those great luminous rays which barely splashed me as they passed. But the wind grew fresher and fresher. I had no choice but to go inside. I closed the great door by feeling, and secured the iron bars; then, still feeling my way, I ascended a little iron staircase which rang and trembled under my feet, and arrived at the top of the lighthouse. There, there was light enough, on my word.

Imagine a gigantic Carcel lamp, with six rows of wicks, around which the walls of the lantern move slowly, some filled with an enormous crystal lens, the others opening on

a great stationary sash, which shelters the flame from the wind. On entering I was dazzled. Those brasses and pewters, those tin reflectors, the convex crystal walls turning with great bluish circles, all that quivering and clashing of lights made me dizzy for a moment.

Gradually, however, my eyes became accustomed to it, and I would take my seat at the foot of the lamp, beside the keeper, who was reading his Plutarch aloud, for fear of falling asleep.

Outside, darkness and the abyss. On the small balcony which surrounds the lantern the wind rushes howling like a madman. The lantern creaks, the sea roars. On the point of the island, over the reefs, the waves break like cannon-shot. At times an invisible finger raps on the glass: some night-bird, attracted by the light, dashing his head against the lens. In the warm, glowing lantern, nothing save the spitting of the flame, the dropping of the oil, the noise of the chain as it

unwinds, and a monotonous voice intoning the life of Demetrius.

At midnight the keeper rose, casting a last glance at his wicks, and we went down. On the stairs we met the comrade of the second watch coming up, rubbing his eyes; the cup and the Plutarch were passed to him. Then, before going to bed, we entered for a moment the room at the back, all littered with chains, with great weights, with pewter reservoirs, and with ropes; and there, by the light of his little lamp, the keeper wrote on the lighthouse log, that lay always open:

"Midnight. Heavy sea. Storm. Sail in the offing."

The Curé of Cucugnan

The Curé of Cucugnan

EVERY year, at Candlemas, the Provençal poets publish at Avignon a merry little book filled to the covers with fine verses and pretty tales. Last year's has just reached me, and I find in it a delicious fabliau, which I am going to try to translate for you, shortening it a little. Hold out your sacks, Parisians. It is the very cream of Provençal flour that I am going to serve you this time.

Abbé Martin was Curé of Cucugnan.

As good as bread, as honest as gold, he loved his flock like a father; in his eyes his Cucugnan would have been paradise on earth, if the people had given him a little more satisfaction. But alas! the spiders spun their webs in his confessional, and on glorious Easter day the consecrated wafers lay untouched in the

holy pyx. The good priest's heart was torn, and he constantly prayed to God that he might not die before he had brought back his scattered flock to the fold.

Now you are about to see that God heard him.

One Sunday, after the Gospel, Monsieur Martin ascended the pulpit.

"Brethren," he said, "you may believe me or not, as you please; the other night I, miserable sinner that I am, found myself at the gate of paradise.

"I knocked; St. Peter opened the gate.

"'Ah! is it you, my dear Monsieur Martin,' he said; 'what good wind blows you here? And what can I do for you?'

"Blessed St. Peter, who keep the record and the keys, could you tell me, if I am not too inquisitive, how many of the people of Cucugnan you have here in paradise?'

"'I cannot refuse you anything, Monsieur Martin; sit down and we will look over the book together.'

"And St. Peter took down his big book, opened it, and put on his spectacles.

"'Now let us see: Cucugnan, you say. Cu-Cu-Cucugnan, here we are. Cucugnan. My worthy Monsieur Martin, the page is entirely blank. Not a soul; no more Cucugnanese than there are fish-bones in a turkey.'

"'What! nobody from Cucugnan here? Nobody? It is impossible! Pray look again.'

"'No one, holy man. Look for yourself, if you think that I am jesting.'

"I stamped the ground, *pécaïre!* and, with clasped hands, I prayed for mercy. Thereupon St. Peter said:

"'Look you, Monsieur Martin, you must n't turn your heart upside down like this, for you might burst a blood-vessel. It is n't your fault, after all. Your Cucugnanese, you see, must be doing their little quarantine in purgatory for sure.'

"'Oh! in the name of charity, great St. Peter, let me at least see them, and console them!'

"'Willingly, my friend. Here, put on these sandals at once, for the roads are not very good. That 's all right; now, walk straight ahead. Do you see the bend in the road yonder? You will find there a silver gate all studded with black crosses, at the right. Knock, and it will be opened. *Adessias!* keep well and hearty!'

"And I walked on and on. What a journey! My hair stands on end even to think of it. A narrow path, full of thorns, of shiny insects, and of hissing serpents, led me to the silver gate.

"Tap! tap!

"'Who knocks?' asked a hoarse, mournful voice.

"'The Curé of Cucugnan.'

"'Of what?'

"'Of Cucugnan.'

"'Ah! Come in.'

"I went in. A tall, handsome angel, with wings as black as night and a robe as brilliant as day, with a diamond key hanging at his

girdle, was writing — cra, cra — in a book larger than that of St. Peter.

"'Well, what do you want, and whom have you come to see?' asked the angel.

"'Beautiful angel of God, I wish to know — I am very inquisitive, perhaps — if you have the Cucugnanese here?'

"'The who?'

"'The Cucugnanese, the people from Cucugnan; I am their pastor.'

"'Ah! Abbé Martin, is it not?'

"'At your service, Monsieur angel.'

"'Cucugnan, you say ——'

"And the angel opened his great book and turned the leaves, moistening his finger with saliva, so that the leaves would slip better.

"'Cucugnan,' he said with a deep sigh; 'Monsieur Martin, we have no one from Cucugnan in purgatory.'

"'Jesus! Mary! Joseph! no one from Cucugnan in purgatory! Great God! where are they, then?'

"'Why, holy man, they are in paradise.

Where in the deuce do you suppose they are?'

"'But I have just come from paradise.'

"'You have just come from there! well?'

"'Well! they are not there. Ah! Blessed Mother of the angels!'

"'What do you suppose, monsieur le curé? If they are neither in paradise nor in purgatory, as there is no half-way place, they must be——'

"'Blessed crucifix! Jesus, Son of David! *Ai! ai!* is it possible? Can it be that great St. Peter lied? Still, I did not hear the cock crow! *Ai!* poor I! how can I go to paradise if my Cucugnanese are not there?'

"'Look you, my poor Monsieur Martin, as you wish to be sure of all this, let it cost what it may, and to see the truth with your own eyes, take this path, and run if you know how to run. You will find on the left a great gateway. There you will learn everything. God grant it!'

"And the angel closed the gate.

"It was a long path, all paved with red-hot embers. I staggered as if I had been drinking; at every step I stumbled; I was drenched; every hair on my body had its drop of sweat and I was panting with thirst. But thanks to the sandals which kind St. Peter had lent me, I did not burn my feet.

"When I had made enough missteps clumping along, I saw at my left a gate — no, a gateway, an enormous gateway, open wide, like the door of a huge oven. Oh! such a spectacle, my children! There nobody asked me my name; and there was no register. You enter there in crowds, and without obstacle, my brethren, as you enter the wine-shops on Sunday.

"The sweat poured from me in great drops, and yet I was stiff with cold; I shuddered. My hair stood on end. I smelt burning, roasting flesh, something like the smell which spreads through Cucugnan when Eloy the horseshoer burns the hoofs of an old ass, to shoe her. I lost my breath in that putrid,

scorching air; I heard a horrible outcry: groans and howls and oaths.

"'Well! are you coming in, or are n't you?' asked a horned demon, pricking me with his fork.

"'I? I am not coming in. I am a friend of God.'

"'You are a friend of God? Well then, you scabby beast, what are you doing here?'

"'I have come — ah! don't mention it, for I can hardly stand on my legs — I have come — I have come a long way, to ask you humbly, if — if, by any chance — you happen to have here any one — any one from — from Cucugnan?'

"'Ah! God's fire! you play the fool, as if you did n't know that all Cucugnan is here. See, you ugly crow, look about you, and you will see how we deal with your precious flock here.'

"And I saw in the midst of a frightful whirlwind of flame:

"Tall Coq-Galine — you all know him,

brethren — Coq-Galine, who used to get drunk so often, and shook his fleas on his poor Clairon.

"I saw Catarinet, that little hussy, with her nose in the air, who slept all alone in the barn. You remember her, my rascals! But let us go on; I have said too much of her.

"I saw Pascal Doigt-de-Poix, who made his oil with Monsieur Julien's olives.

"I saw Babet the gleaner, who, when she gleaned, in order to make up her bundle more quickly, took handfuls from the sheaves.

"I saw Master Grapasi, who oiled the wheel of his barrow so carefully.

"And Dauphine, who sold the water from his well so dear.

"And Le Tortillard, who, when he met me carrying the Sacrament, went his way, with his cap on his head and his pipe in his mouth, as proud as Artaban, as if he had met a dog.

"And Coulau with his Zette, and Jacques, and Pierre, and Toni ——"

Intensely moved, white with fear, the congregation groaned, as they saw, through the open jaws of hell, this one his father, this one his mother, this one his grandmother, and this one his sister.

"'You must see, brethren,' continued worthy Abbé Martin, 'you must realise that this cannot last. I have charge of your souls, and I am determined to save you from the abyss into which you are in a fair way to plunge head foremost. To-morrow I shall go to work —no later than to-morrow. And work will not be lacking. This is how I shall go about it. In order that all may go well, we must do everything in an orderly manner. We will work row by row, as they do at Jonquières when they dance.

"To-morrow, Monday, I will confess the old men and the old women. That is nothing.

"Tuesday, the children. That will not take long.

"Wednesday, the boys and girls. That may take some time.

"Thursday, the men. We will cut that short.

"Friday, the women. I will say: 'No lies!'

"Saturday, the miller! One day will not be too much for him alone.

"And if we have finished Sunday, we shall be very lucky.

"You see, my children, when the grain is ripe, we must cut it; when the wine is drawn, we must drink it. We have plenty of soiled linen — it is our business to wash it and to wash it thoroughly.

"That is the grace that I wish you. Amen!"

What was said was done. The washing was done.

Since that memorable Sunday, the perfume of the virtues of Cucugnan can be smelt ten leagues away.

And the worthy pastor, Monsieur Martin, happy and light-hearted, dreamed the other night that, followed by his whole flock, he

climbed in a gorgeous procession, amid lighted candles, a cloud of fragrant incense, and choir-boys singing the Te Deum, the brilliantly lighted road to the City of God.

And this is the story of the Curé of Cucugnan, as I was ordered to tell it you by that tall rascal of a Roumanille, who heard it himself from some other jovial fellow.

Old Folks

Old Folks

"A letter, Father Azan?"

"Yes, monsieur, it comes from Paris."

He was as proud as a peacock that it came from Paris, was excellent Father Azan. But not I. Something told me that that Parisian epistle from Rue Jean-Jacques, falling upon my table unexpectedly and so early in the morning, would make me lose my whole day. I was not mistaken; see for yourself:

"You must do me a favour, my friend. You must close your mill for one day and go at once to Eyguières—Eyguières is a large village three or four leagues from you, just a pleasant walk. On arriving there, you will ask for the orphan convent. The next house to the convent is a low house with gray shutters, and a small garden behind. You will go in without knocking—the door is always open—and as you enter, you will say

in a very loud voice: "Good day, my good people! I am Maurice's friend!' Then you will see two old folks—oh! very old, immeasurably old — who will hold out their arms to you from the depths of their great easy-chairs, and you will embrace them for me, with all your heart, as if they were your own people. Then you will talk; they will talk about me; nothing but me; they will tell you a thousand foolish things, which you will listen to without laughing.—You won't laugh, will you?—They are my grandparents, two people whose whole life I am, and who have not seen me for ten years. Ten years is a long while! but what can you expect? Paris holds me tight, and their great age holds them. They are so old, that if they should come to see me they would fall to pieces on the way. Luckily, you are in the neighbourhood, my dear miller, and, while embracing you, the poor people will think that they are embracing me to some extent. I have so often written to them of you and of the warm friendship——"

The devil take our friendship! It happened to be magnificent weather that morning, but not at all appropriate for walking on the road; too much mistral and too little sunshine — a genuine Provençal day. When that infernal letter arrived, I had already chosen my *cagnard* (place of shelter) between two rocks, and I was dreaming of staying there all day, like a lizard, drinking light, and listening to the song of the pines. However, what was I to do? I closed the mill, grumbling, and put the key under the door. My stick and my pipe, and I was off.

I reached Eyguières about two o'clock. The village was deserted; every soul was in the fields. Under the elms of the farmyards, white with dust, the grasshoppers were singing as in the heart of Crau. There was an ass taking the air on the square, in front of the mayor's office, and a flock of pigeons on the church fountain; but no one to point out to me the way to the orphanage. Luckily an old fairy appeared of a sudden, sitting in her

doorway and spinning. I told her what I was looking for; and as that fairy was very powerful, she had only to raise her distaff: instantly the orphan convent rose before me as if by magic. It was a high, gloomy, dark building, proud to be able to show, above its ogive doorway, an old cross of red sandstone with some Latin words around it. Beside it, I saw another smaller house. Gray shutters and a garden behind. I recognised it instantly, and I entered without knocking.

As long as I live I shall never forget that long, quiet, cool corridor, with its pink walls, the little garden quivering at the rear through a curtain of light colour, and over all the panels faded flowers and lyres. It seemed to me as if I were entering the house of some old bailiff of the days of Sedaine. Through a half-opened door at the end of the corridor, on the left, I could hear the ticking of a big clock, and the voice of a child, but of a child of school age, reading and pausing after each word: "Then — St. — I-re-næ-us — cried —

I—am—the—grain—of—the—Lord.—I—must—be—ground—by—the—teeth—of—these—an-i-mals."

I approached the door softly and looked in.

In the peaceful half-light of a small bedroom, a good old man with red cheeks, wrinkled to the ends of his fingers, was sleeping in an easy-chair, with his mouth open and his hands on his knees. At his feet a little girl dressed in blue — big cape and little cap, the costume of the convent — was reading the life of St. Irenæus from a book larger than herself. That miraculous reading had produced its effect upon the whole household. The old man was sleeping in his chair, the flies on the ceiling, the canaries in their cage at the window. The great clock snored, tick-tack, tick-tack. There was nothing awake in the whole chamber save a broad band of light which entered, straight and white, through the closed shutters, full of living sparks and microscopic waltzes. Amid the

general drowsiness, the child gravely continued her reading: "In-stant-ly— two —lions— rushed — up—on — him — and — ate— him—up." It was at that moment that I entered. The lions of St. Irenæus rushing into the room would not have produced greater stupefaction than I did. A genuine stage effect! The little girl shrieked, the great book fell, the flies and canaries woke, the clock struck, the old man sat up with a start, greatly alarmed, and I myself, slightly disturbed, halted in the doorway and shouted very loud:

"Good day, good people! I am Maurice's friend."

Oh, if you had seen the poor old man then; if you had seen him come towards me with outstretched arms, embrace me, shake my hands, and run wildly about the room, exclaiming:

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!"

Every wrinkle in his face laughed. His cheeks flushed, and he stammered:

"Ah! monsieur; ah! monsieur."

Then he hurried towards the end of the room, calling:

"Mamette! Mamette!"

A door opened, there was a mouselike tread in the hall; it was Mamette. Nothing could be prettier than that little old woman, with her shell-shaped bonnet, her nun's gown, and the embroidered handkerchief which she held in her hand, to do me honour, after the ancient fashion. It was a most touching thing —they actually resembled each other. With a tower of hair and yellow shells, he too might have been named Mamette. But the real Mamette must have wept bitterly during her life, and she was even more wrinkled than the other. Like the other, too, she had with her a child from the orphanage, a little nurse in a blue cape, who never left her; and to see those two people cared for by those two orphans was the most touching picture that one could imagine.

When she came in, Mamette began by

making me a low reverence, but the old man cut it in two by a word:

"This is Maurice's friend."

Instantly she began to tremble and weep, she lost her handkerchief, turned red, red as a peony, even redder than he. Those old people had but a single drop of blood in their veins, and at the slightest emotion it rushed to their faces.

"Quick, quick, a chair!" said the old woman to her little one.

"Open the shutters," cried the old man to his.

And, each taking me by a hand, they trotted to the window, which was thrown wide open that they might the better see me. The easy-chairs were brought, and I stationed myself between them on a folding-chair, the little blue girls behind us, and the questioning began.

"How is he? What is he doing? Why does n't he come to see us? Is he happy?" and *patati!* and *patata!* that sort of thing for hours.

For my part, I answered all their questions to the best of my ability, giving such details concerning my friend as I knew, and unblushingly inventing those that I did not know; above all, being careful not to confess that I had never noticed whether his window closed tightly, or what colour the paper was on the walls of his bedroom.

"The paper of his bedroom! it is blue, madame, a light blue, with flowers."

"Really?" said the poor old woman, deeply moved; and she added, turning towards her husband: "He is such a good boy!"

"Oh, yes; he is a good boy!" said the other, enthusiastically.

And all the time I was talking, they exchanged little nods of the head, little sly laughs, and winks, and significant glances; or else the old man would stoop over and say to me:

"Speak louder. She's a little hard of hearing."

And she, on her side:

"A little louder, please! he does n't hear very well."

Thereupon I would raise my voice; and both would thank me with a smile; and in those faded smiles, leaning towards me, seeking in the depths of my eyes the image of their Maurice, I, for my part, was deeply moved to find that image in theirs — vague, veiled, almost intangible, as if I saw my friend smiling at me, a long way off, in a mist.

Suddenly the old man sat erect in his chair.

"Why, it just occurs to me, Mamette—perhaps he has not breakfasted!"

And Mamette, in dismay, tossed her arms into the air:

"Not breakfasted! Great Heaven!"

I thought that they were still talking about Maurice, and I was about to reply that that excellent youth never waited later than noon for his breakfast. But no, they were talking about me; and you should have seen the commotion when I confessed that I was still fasting.

Old Folks

"Lay the table quick, my little blues; the table in the middle of the room, and the Sunday cloth, the flowered plates. And let's not laugh so much, if you please; and make haste."

I should say that they did make haste. They had hardly had time to break three plates when the breakfast was ready.

"A nice little breakfast," said Mamette, as she led me to the table, "but you will be all alone. We have already eaten this morning."

Poor old people! at no matter what time you take them, they have always eaten that morning.

Mamette's nice little breakfast consisted of two fingers of milk, some dates, and a *barquette,* something like a shortcake; enough to support her and her canaries for at least a week. And to think that I alone consumed all those provisions! What indignation about the little table! How the little blues whispered as they nudged each other; and yonder in their cage, how the canaries seemed to say

to each other: "Oh! see that gentleman eating the whole *barquette!*"

I did eat it all, in truth, and almost without noticing it, occupied as I was in looking about that light, peaceful room, where the air was filled with an odour as of ancient things. Above all, there were two little beds from which I could not remove my eyes. Those beds, almost cradles, I imagined as they looked in the morning at daybreak, when they were still hidden behind their great French curtains. The clock strikes three. That is the hour when all old people wake.

"Are you asleep, Mamette?"

"No, my dear."

"Is n't Maurice a nice boy?"

"Oh! he is a nice boy, indeed."

And I imagined a long conversation like that, simply from having seen those two little beds standing side by side.

Meanwhile, there was a terrible drama taking place at the other end of the room, before the cupboard. It was a matter of reaching on

the top shelf a certain jar of brandied cherries, which had been awaiting Maurice ten years, and which they desired to open in my honour.

Despite the entreaties of Mamette, the old man had insisted upon going to get the cherries himself; and, having mounted a chair, to his wife's great alarm, he was trying to reach them. You can imagine the picture—the old man trembling and standing on tiptoe, the little blues clinging to his chair, Mamette behind him, gasping, with outstretched arms, and over all a faint perfume of bergamot, which exhaled from the open cupboard and from the great piles of unbleached linen. It was delightful.

At last, after many efforts, they succeeded in taking the famous jar from the cupboard, and with it an old silver cup, all marred and dented, Maurice's cup when he was small. They filled it for me with cherries to the brim; Maurice was so fond of cherries! and while serving me the old man whispered in my ear with the air of an epicurean:

"You are very lucky, you are, to have a chance to eat them. My wife made them herself. You are going to taste something good."

Alas! his wife had made them, but she had forgotten to sweeten them. What can you expect? People become absent-minded as they grow old. Your cherries were atrocious, my poor Mamette. But that did not prevent me from eating them to the last one, without a wink.

The repast at an end, I rose to take leave of my hosts. They would have been glad to keep me a little longer, to talk about the good boy; but the day was drawing to a close, the mill was far away, and I must go.

The old man rose as I did.

"My coat, Mamette. I am going with him to the square."

Surely Mamette believed in her heart that it was already a little cool for him to escort me to the square, but she made no sign. However, while she was helping him to put his

arms into the sleeves of his coat, a fine coat of the colour of Spanish snuff, I heard the dear creature whisper to him:

"You won't stay out too late, will you?"

And he, with a little sly look:

"Ha! ha! I don't know—perhaps."

At that they looked at each other with a laugh, and the little blues laughed to see them laugh, and the canaries in their corner laughed also in their way. Between ourselves, I believe that the odour of the cherries had intoxicated them all a little.

The night was falling when the grandfather and I went out. The little blue followed us at a distance, to take him home; but he did not see her and he was as proud as possible to walk on my arm, like a man. Mamette, with radiant face, saw that from her doorstep, and as she watched us, she nodded her head prettily, as if to say:

"Never mind, he can still walk, my poor old man!"

The Death of the Dauphin

The Death of the Dauphin

THE little Dauphin is sick; the little Dauphin is going to die. In all the churches of the realm the Blessed Sacrament is exposed night and day, and tall candles are burning for the recovery of the royal child. The streets in the old residence are sad and silent, the bells no longer ring, the carriages go at a foot-pace. About the palace the curious citizens watch through the iron grills the porters with gilt paunches talking in the courtyards with an air of importance.

The whole château is in commotion. Chamberlains, majordomos, run hastily up and down the marble staircases. The galleries are full of pages and of courtiers in silk garments, who go from group to group asking news in undertones. On the broad steps weeping maids of honour greet one another with low courtesies,

wiping their eyes with pretty embroidered handkerchiefs.

In the orangery there is a great assemblage of long-robed doctors. Through the windows they can be seen flourishing their long black sleeves and bending majestically their hammer-like wigs. The little Dauphin's governor and equerry walk back and forth before the door, awaiting the decision of the faculty. Scullions pass them by without saluting them. The equerry swears like a heathen, the governor recites lines from Horace. And meanwhile, in the direction of the stables one hears a long, plaintive neigh. It is the little Dauphin's horse, calling sadly from his empty manger.

And the king? Where is monseigneur the king? The king is all alone in a room at the end of the château. Majesties do not like to be seen weeping. As for the queen, that is a different matter. Seated at the little Dauphin's pillow, her lovely face is bathed in tears, and she sobs aloud before them all, as a linen-draper's wife might do.

The Death of the Dauphin

In his lace-bedecked crib the little Dauphin, whiter than the cushions upon which he lies, is resting now with closed eyes. They think that he sleeps; but no. The little Dauphin is not asleep. He turns to his mother, and seeing that she is weeping, he says to her:

"Madame queen, why do you weep? Is it because you really believe that I am going to die?"

The queen tries to reply. Sobs prevent her from speaking.

"Pray do not weep, madame queen; you forget that I am the Dauphin, and that dauphins cannot die like this."

The queen sobs more bitterly than ever, and the little Dauphin begins to be alarmed.

"I say," he says, "I don't want Death to come and take me, and I will find a way to prevent his coming here. Let them send at once forty very strong troopers to stand guard around our bed! Let a hundred big guns watch night and day, with matches lighted,

under our windows! And woe to Death if it dares approach us!"

To please the royal child the queen makes a sign. In a moment they hear the big guns rumbling through the courtyard; and forty tall troopers, halberds in hand, take their places about the room. They are all old soldiers with gray mustaches. The little Dauphin claps his hands when he sees them. He recognises one of them and calls him:

"Lorrain! Lorrain!"

The soldier steps forward towards the bed.

"I love you dearly, my old Lorrain. Let me see your big sword. If Death tries to take me you must kill him, won't you?"

"Yes, monseigneur," Lorrain replies. And two great tears roll down his bronzed cheeks.

At that moment the chaplain approaches the little Dauphin and talks with him for a long time in a low voice, showing him a crucifix. The little Dauphin listens with an expression of great surprise, then, abruptly interrupting him, he says:

"I understand what you say, monsieur l'abbé; but tell me, could n't my little friend Beppo die in my place, if I gave him a lot of money ?"

The chaplain continues to speak in a low voice, and the little Dauphin's expression becomes more and more astonished.

When the chaplain has finished, the little Dauphin replies with a deep sigh:

"All this that you tell me is very sad, monsieur l'abbé; but one thing consoles me, and that is that up yonder, in the paradise of the stars, I shall still be the Dauphin. I know that the good Lord is my cousin, and that He cannot fail to treat me according to my rank."

Then he adds, turning to his mother:

"Let them bring me my richest clothes, my doublet of white ermine and my velvet slippers! I wish to make myself handsome for the angels, and to enter paradise in the costume of a Dauphin."

A third time, the chaplain leans towards the little Dauphin and talks to him for a long time

in a low voice. In the midst of his harangue, the royal child angrily interrupts:

"Why then, to be Dauphin is to be nothing at all!"

And, refusing to listen to anything more, the little Dauphin turns towards the wall and weeps bitterly.

The Legend of the Man with the Golden Brain

The Legend of the Man with the Golden Brain

ON reading your letter, madame, I had a feeling of remorse. I was angry with myself for the rather too doleful colour of my stories, and I am determined to offer you to-day something joyous, yes, wildly joyous.

For why should I be melancholy, after all? I live a thousand leagues from Parisian fogs, on a hill bathed in light, in the land of tambourines and muscat wine. About me, everything is sunshine and music; I have orchestras of finches, choruses of tomtits; in the morning the curlews say: "Cureli! cureli!"; at noon, the grasshoppers; and then the shepherds playing their fifes, and the lovely dark-faced girls whom I hear laughing among the vines. In truth, the spot is ill-chosen to paint in black; I ought rather to send to the

ladies rose-coloured poems and baskets full of love-tales.

But no! I am still tóo near Paris. Every day, even among my pines, the capital splashes me with its melancholy. At the very hour that I write these lines, I learn of the wretched death of Charles Barbara, and my mill is mourning bitterly. Adieu, curlews and grasshoppers! I have now no heart for gayety. And that is why, madame, instead of the pretty, jesting story that I had determined to tell you, you will have again to-day a melancholy legend.

There was once a man who had a golden brain; yes, madame, a golden brain. When he came into the world, the doctors thought that the child would not live, his head was so heavy and his brain so immeasurably large. He did live, however, and grew in the sunlight like a fine olive-tree; but his great head always led him astray, and it was heartrending to see him collide with all the furniture as

he walked. Often he fell. One day he rolled from the top of a flight of stairs and struck his forehead against a marble step, upon which his skull rang like a bar of metal. They thought that he was dead; but on lifting him up, they found only a slight wound, with two or three drops of gold among his fair hair. Thus it was that his parents first learned that the child had a golden brain.

The thing was kept secret; the poor little fellow himself suspected nothing. From time to time he asked why they no longer allowed him to run about in front of the gate, with the children in the street.

"Because they would steal you, my lovely treasure!" his mother replied.

Thereupon the little fellow was terribly afraid of being stolen; he went back to his lonely play, without a word, and stumbled heavily from one room to another.

Not until he was eighteen years old did his parents disclose to him the miraculous gift that he owed to destiny; and as they had

educated and supported him until then, they asked him, in return, for a little of his gold. The child did not hesitate; on the instant—how? by what means? the legend does not say—he tore from his brain a piece of solid gold as big as a nut, and proudly tossed it upon his mother's knees. Then, dazzled by the wealth that he bore in his head, mad with desires, drunken with his power, he left his father's house and went out into the world, lavishing his treasure.

From the pace at which he lived, like a prince, sowing gold without counting, one would have said that his brain was inexhaustible. It did become exhausted, however, and little by little one could see his eyes grow dull, his cheeks become more and more hollow. At last, one morning, after a wild debauch, the unfortunate fellow, alone among the remnants of the feast and the paling candles, was alarmed at the enormous hole he had already made in his ingot; it was high time to stop.

Thenceforth he led a new kind of life. The man with the golden brain went off to live apart, working with his hands, suspicious and timid as a miser, shunning temptations, trying to forget, himself, that fatal wealth which he was determined never to touch again. Unfortunately a friend followed him into the solitude and that friend knew his secret.

One night the poor man was awakened with a start by a pain in his head, a frightful pain. He sprang out of bed in deadly alarm, and saw by the moonlight his friend running away, with something hidden under his cloak.

Another piece of his brain stolen from him!

Some time after, the man with the golden brain fell in love, and then it was all over. He loved with his whole heart a little fair-haired woman, who loved him well, too, but who preferred her ribbons and her white feathers and the pretty little bronze tassels tapping the sides of her boots.

In the hands of that dainty creature, half

bird and half doll, the gold pieces melted merrily away. She had every sort of caprice; and he could never say no; indeed, for fear of causing her pain, he concealed from her to the end the sad secret of his fortune.

"We must be very rich," she would say.

And the poor man would answer:

"Oh, yes! very rich!" and he would smile fondly at the little bluebird that was innocently consuming his brain. Sometimes, however, fear seized him; and he longed again to be a miser; but then the little woman would come hopping towards him and say:

"Come, my husband, you are so rich, buy me something very costly."

And he would buy something very costly.

This state of affairs lasted two years; then, one morning, the little woman died, no one knew why, like a bird. The treasure was almost exhausted; with what remained the widower provided a grand funeral for his dear dead wife. Bells clanging, heavy coaches draped in black, plumed horses, silver tears

on the velvet — nothing seemed too fine to him. What mattered his gold to him now? He gave of it for the church, for the bearers, for the women who sold immortelles; he gave it on all sides, without bargaining. So that, when he left the cemetery, almost nothing was left of that marvellous brain, save a few tiny pieces on the walls of his skull.

Then people saw him wandering through the streets, with a wild expression, his hands before him, stumbling like a drunken man. At night, at the hour when the shops were lighted, he halted in front of a large show-window in which a bewildering mass of stars and jewels glittered in the light, and he stood there a long while gazing at two blue satin boots bordered with swan's-down. "I know some one to whom those boots would give great pleasure," he said to himself with a smile; and, already forgetting that the little woman was dead, he went in to buy them.

From the depths of her back-shop, the dealer heard a loud outcry; she ran to the

spot, and recoiled in terror at sight of a man leaning against the window and gazing at her sorrowfully with a dazed look. He held in one hand the blue boots trimmed with swan's-down, and held out to her the other hand all bleeding, with scrapings of gold on the ends of the nails.

Such, madame, is the legend of the man with the golden brain.

Although it has the aspect of a fanciful tale, it is true from beginning to end. There are in this world many poor fellows who are contented to live on their brains, and who pay in refined gold, with their marrow and their substance, for the most trivial things of life. It is to them a pain recurring every day; and then, when they are weary of suffering——

The Three Low Masses

The Three Low Masses

A Christmas Tale

I

"TWO truffled turkeys, Garrigou?"

"Yes, father, two magnificent turkeys stuffed with truffles. I know something about it, for I myself helped to stuff them. One would have said that the skin would burst when they were roasting, it was distended so."

"Jesus-Maria! and I love turkeys so dearly, Give me my surplice quickly, Garrigou. And what else did you see in the kitchen besides the turkeys?"

"Oh, all sorts of good things. Since noon, we have done nothing but pluck pheasants, lapwings, pullets, chickens, and heath-cocks. Feathers flew in every direction. And then

from the pond they brought eels, golden carp, trout, and——"

"How big are the trout, Garrigou?"

"As big as that, father. Enormous!"

"*Mon Dieu!* It seems to me that I see them. Did you put the wine in the cups?"

"Yes, father, I put the wine in the cups. But indeed! it is no such wine as you will drink before long, after the midnight mass. If you could just look into the dining-hall at the château, and see all those decanters, filled with wines of all colours. And the silver plate, the carved centrepieces, the flowers and the candelabra! Never again will such a *réveillon*[1] be seen. Monsieur the marquis has invited all the nobles of the neighbourhood. There will be at least forty at the table, without counting the notary and the bailiff. Ah! you are very fortunate to be one of them, father! Simply from smelling those fine turkeys, the odour of truffles follows me everywhere. Meuh!"

[1] *Réveillon,*—a late supper; a supper after midnight; specifically, a Christmas-eve feast or revel.—[Trans.]

The Three Low Masses

"Come, come, my boy! Let us beware of the sin of gluttony, especially on the eve of the Nativity. Go at once and light the candles, and ring the first bell for mass; for midnight is near at hand and we must not be late."

This conversation took place on Christmas night in the year of grace one thousand six hundred and something, between the Reverend Dom Balaguère, former prior of the Barnabites, and now stipendiary chaplain of the Lords of Trinquelage, and his little clerk Garrigou, or rather him whom he believed to be his little clerk Garrigou; for you must know that the devil on that evening had assumed the round face and insignificant features of the young sacristan, that he might the more easily lead the father into temptation and induce him to commit the frightful sin of gluttony. And so, while the pretended Garrigou (hum! hum!) made the bells of the seignorial chapel ring out lustily, the reverend father finished attiring himself in his chasuble, in the little sacristy of the château;

and, with his mind already perturbed by all these gastronomic details, he repeated to himself as he dressed:

"Roast turkeys, golden carp, and trout as big as that!"

Without, the night wind blew, scattering abroad the music of the bells, and one after another lights appeared in the darkness on the sides of Mount Ventoux, on the summit of which rose the ancient towers of Trinquelage. They were the families of the farmers, coming to listen to the midnight mass at the château. They climbed the hill singing, in groups of five or six, the father ahead, lantern in hand, the women enveloped in their ample dark cloaks, in which the children huddled together and sheltered themselves from the sharp air. Despite the hour and the cold, all those people walked cheerily along, upheld by the thought that, after the mass, there would be a table laid for them in the kitchens, as there was every year. From time to time, on the steep slope, the

carriage of a nobleman, preceded by torch-bearers, passed with its windows gleaming in the moonlight like mirrors; or a mule trotted by, jingling his bells, and by the light of the mist-enveloped torches, the farmers recognised their bailiff and saluted him as he passed:

"Good evening, good evening, Master Arnoton!"

"Good evening, good evening, my children!"

The night was clear, the stars glistered more brightly in the frosty air; the wind had a sting in it, and a fine hoarfrost, which clung to the garments without wetting them, maintained faithfully the traditions of Christmas white with snow. At the summit of the hill, the château appeared as their destination, with its enormous mass of towers and gables, the steeple of its chapel rising into the blue-black sky; and a multitude of little twinkling lights, going and coming, flickering at every window, resembled, against the dark

background of the building, sparks among the ashes of burnt paper.

The drawbridge and postern passed, they were obliged, in order to reach the chapel, to go through the first courtyard, filled with carriages, servants, bearers of sedan-chairs, brilliantly lighted by the flame of the torches and the blaze from the kitchens. One could hear the grinding of the spits, the clattering of the saucepans, the clink of the glasses and silverware, being moved about in preparation for the banquet, and over it all, a warm vapour, fragrant with the odour of roasting flesh and the pungent herbs of complicated sauces, led the farmers to say, with the chaplain and the bailiff and everybody else:

"What a fine *réveillon* we are going to have after mass!"

II

TING a ling! ting a ling, a ling!

That is the signal for the mass to begin. In the chapel of the château, a miniature

cathedral with intersecting arches and oaken wainscoting reaching to the ceiling, the tapestries have been hung and all the candles lighted. And such a multitude! and such toilets! First of all, seated in the carved pews which surround the choir, is the Sire de Trinquelage, in a salmon-coloured silk coat, and about him all the noble lords, his guests. Opposite, upon *prie-dieus* of silver, the old dowager marquise in her gown of flame-coloured brocade has taken her place, and the young Dame de Trinquelage, with a lofty tower of lace upon her head, fluted according to the latest style at the French court. Lower down, clad in black, with enormous pointed wings and shaven faces, are seen Thomas Arnoton the bailiff and Master Ambroy the notary, two sober notes among those shimmering silks and figured damasks. Then come the stout majordomos, the pages, the huntsmen, the stewards, and Dame Barbe with all her keys hanging at her side upon a slender silver ring. In the background, on

the benches, sit the lesser functionaries, the maidservants and the farmers with their families; and lastly, at the farther end, against the door, which they open and close with care, the scullions come between two sauces to obtain a whiff of the mass, and to bring an odour of *réveillon* into the church, which is all in festal array and warm with the flame of so many candles.

Was it the sight of those little white caps which distracted the attention of the celebrant of the mass; was it not rather Garrigou's bell, that frantic little bell jingling at the foot of the altar with infernal precipitation, which seemed to be saying all the time:

"Let us hurry, let us hurry. The sooner we have finished, the sooner we shall be at the table."

The fact is that every time that that devil's own bell rang, the chaplain forgot the mass and thought only of the *réveillon*. He imagined the bustling cooks, the ovens beneath which a genuine forge fire was burning, the

steam ascending from the open saucepans, and, bathed in that steam, two superb stuffed turkeys, distended and mottled with truffles.

Or else he saw long lines of pages pass, carrying dishes surrounded by tempting vapours, and entered with them the huge room already prepared for the feast. O joy! there was the enormous table all laden, and blazing with light; the peacocks with all their feathers, the pheasants flapping their golden wings, the ruby-coloured decanters, the pyramids of fruit resplendent amid the green branches, and those marvellous fish of which Garrigou had told him (ah, yes! Garrigou indeed!) lying upon a bed of fennel, their scales glittering as if they were fresh from the water, with a bunch of fragrant herbs in their monstrous nostrils. So vivid was the vision of those marvels, that it seemed to Dom Balaguère that all those wonderful dishes were actually before him on the borders of the altar-cloth; and two or three times, he surprised himself saying the *Benedicite,* instead

of the *Dominus vobiscum!* Aside from these slight mistakes, the worthy man read the service most conscientiously, without skipping a line, without omitting a genuflexion; and everything went well until the end of the first mass; for you know that on Christmas day the same celebrant must say three masses in succession.

"One!" said the chaplain to himself, with a sigh of relief; then, without wasting a minute, he motioned to his clerk, or to him whom he believed to be his clerk, and —

Ting a ling, a ling, a ling! ting a ling!

The second mass had begun, and with it began also Dom Balaguère's sin.

"Quick, quick, let us make haste!" cried Garrigou's bell in its shrill little voice; and that time the unhappy celebrant, wholly given over to the demon of gluttony, rushed through the service and devoured the pages with the avidity of his over-excited appetite. In frenzied haste he stooped and rose, made the signs of the cross and the genuflexions, and

abridged all the motions, in order to have done the sooner. He barely put out his arms in the Gospel, he barely struck his breast at the *Confiteor*. The clerk and he vied with each other to see which could gabble faster. Verses and responses came rushing forth and tripped over one another. Words half pronounced, without opening the mouth, which would have taken too much time, ended in incomprehensible murmurs.

"*Oremus ps — ps — ps* ——"

"*Mea culpa — pa — pa* ——"

Like hurried vine-dressers, trampling the grapes into the vat, they both wallowed in the Latin of the mass, sending splashes in all directions.

"*Dom—scum!*" said Balaguère.

"— *Stutuo!*" replied Garrigou; and all the time the infernal little bell jangled in their ears like the bells that are put on post-horses to make them gallop at the top of their speed. As you may imagine, at that rate a low mass is soon despatched.

"Two!" said the chaplain, breathlessly; then, without taking time to breathe, flushed and perspiring, he ran down the steps of the altar, and——

Ting a ling, ling! ting a ling, ling!

The third mass had begun. He had but a few more steps to go to reach the banquet hall; but alas! as the *réveillon* drew nearer, the ill-fated Balaguère was seized with a frenzy of impatience and gluttony. His vision became more vivid, the golden carp, the roast turkeys were there before him; he touched them; he—O Heaven! the dishes smoked, the wines scented the air; and the little bell, frantically shaking its clapper, shouted to him:

"Quicker, quicker, still quicker!"

But how could he go any quicker? His lips barely moved. He no longer pronounced the words. He could only cheat the good Lord altogether and filch the mass from Him. And that is what he did, the villain; passing from temptation to temptation, he began by

skipping one verse, then two; then the Epistle was too long, and he did not finish it; he barely grazed the Gospel, passed the *Credo* without going in, jumped over the *Pater,* nodded to the Preface at a distance; and thus by leaps and bounds rushed into eternal damnation, still followed by the infamous Garrigou (get thee behind me, Satan !), who seconded him with wonderful alacrity, raised his chasuble, turned the leaves two by two, collided with the desks, overturned the communion-cups, and all the time shook the little bell louder and louder, faster and faster.

You should have seen the dismayed look on the faces of the whole congregation ! Obliged to follow by the pantomime of the priest the mass of which they did not hear a word, some rose while the others knelt, remained seated when the others were standing; and all the phases of that extraordinary service were confused upon the benches in a multitude of diversified attitudes. The Christmas star, travelling along the roads of the sky

towards the little stable, turned pale with horror when it witnessed that confusion.

"The abbé goes too fast. No one can follow him," muttered the old dowager as she nodded her head-dress in bewilderment.

Master Arnoton, his great steel spectacles on his nose, looked through his prayer-book, trying to find out where they might be. But in reality, all those worthy folk, who also were thinking of the feast, were not sorry that the mass should travel at that lightning speed; and when Dom Balaguère, with radiant face, turned towards the congregation and shouted at the top of his voice: *"Ite, missa est,"* the whole chapel as with one voice responded with a *"Deo gratias"* so joyous, so infectious, that they fancied themselves already at table honouring the first toast of the *réveillon.*

III

FIVE minutes later the throng of nobles was seated in the great banquet-hall, the

chaplain among them. The château, illuminated from top to bottom, rang with songs and shouts, and laughter and tumult; and the venerable Dom Balaguère planted his fork in the wing of a chicken, drowning his remorse for his sin in floods of the Pope's wine and in toothsome sauces. He ate and drank so much, the poor holy man, that he died during the night of a terrible attack, without even time to repent; then in the morning, he arrived in heaven, which was still all astir with the festivities of the night; and I leave you to imagine how he was received there.

"Depart from my sight, thou evil Christian!" said the Sovereign Judge, the Master of us all. "Thy sin is monstrous enough to efface a whole lifetime of virtue. Ah! thou didst steal a mass from me. Even so! thou shalt pay for three hundred masses in its place, and thou shalt not enter paradise until thou hast celebrated in thine own chapel these three hundred Christmas masses, in the

presence of all those who have sinned with thee and by thy fault."

And this is the true legend of Dom Balaguère, as it is told in the land of olives. The château of Trinquelage does not exist to-day, but the chapel still stands erect on the summit of Mount Ventoux, in a clump of green oaks. The wind sways its disjointed door, the grass grows on the threshold; there are nests at the corner of the altar and in the embrasures of the tall windows, whence the stained glass long since vanished. But it appears that every year, at Christmas, a supernatural light wanders among the ruins, and that as they go to the midnight masses and the *réveillons,* the peasants see that spectral chapel lighted by invisible candles, which burn in the open air, even in the snow and the wind. You may laugh if you please, but a vine-dresser of the neighbourhood, named Garrigue, doubtless a descendant of Garrigou, tells me that one Christmas eve, being a little tipsy, he lost his

way on the mountain towards Trinquelage; and this is what he saw. Until eleven o'clock, nothing. Everything was silent, dark, lifeless. Suddenly, about midnight, a carillon rang out at the top of the belfry; an old, old carillon, which seemed to be ten leagues away. Soon, on the road up the mountain, Garrigue saw flickering flames and vague shadows. Beneath the porch of the chapel, people walked and whispered:

"Good evening, Master Arnoton!"

"Good evening, good evening, my children."

When everybody had gone in, my vine-dresser, who was very courageous, noiselessly drew near, and looking through the broken door, saw a strange spectacle. All those people whom he had seen pass were arranged around the choir, in the ruined nave, as if the benches of olden time still existed. Fine ladies in brocade, nobles belaced from head to foot, peasants in gaudy jackets such as our great-grandfathers wore, and all with a

venerable, faded, dusty, weary aspect. From time to time, night-birds, the ordinary occupants of the chapel, aroused by that blaze of light, fluttered about the candles, whose flames ascended straight towards heaven, as indistinct as if they were burning behind gauze; and one thing that amused Garrigue greatly was a certain individual with great steel spectacles, who kept shaking his old black wig, upon which one of those birds stood erect, with its feet entangled in the hair, silently flapping its wings.

In the background, a little old man, with a childish form, kneeling in the middle of the choir, shook desperately a tongueless, voiceless bell, while a priest, dressed in old gold, went to and fro before the altar, repeating prayers of which not a word could be heard. Beyond a doubt it was Dom Balaguère, saying his third low mass.

The Two Inns

The Two Inns

I WAS returning from Nîmes, one July afternoon. The heat was overwhelming. The scorching white road stretched out as far as the eye could see, a dusty line, between gardens of olive-trees and of scrub-oaks, beneath a huge sun of dull silver, which filled the whole sky. Not a sign of shade, not a breath of wind. Nothing save the vibration of the hot air, and the shrill cry of the grasshoppers, a mad, deafening music, at a hurried tempo, which seemed the very resonance of that boundless, luminous vibration. I had been walking through this desert for two hours, when suddenly a group of white houses detached itself from the dust of the road before me. It was what is called the relay of St. Vincent: five or six farmhouses, long, red-roofed barns, a watering-trough without water, in a clump of meagre fig-trees, and, on

the outskirts of the hamlet, two large inns looking at each other from opposite sides of the street.

There was something striking in the proximity of those two inns. On one side, a large new building, full of life and animation, all the doors thrown open, the diligence stopping in front, the steaming horses being unharnessed, the passengers drinking hastily on the road, in the short shadow of the walls; the courtyard crowded with mules and vehicles; carters lying under the sheds, awaiting the cool of the evening. Within, outcries, oaths, blows of fists on the tables, the clinking of glasses, the clicking of billiard-balls, the popping of corks, and above all that uproar, a jovial, ringing voice, singing so loud that the windows shook:

" Pretty little Margoton,
As soon as dawn was waking,
Took her silver pitcher,
And went off to the well."

The inn opposite, on the contrary, was

silent and seemed deserted. Grass under the gateway, shutters broken, over the door a rusty twig of holly hanging like an old plume, the door-step strewn with stones from the road. It was all so poverty-stricken, so pitiful, that it seemed an act of charity to stop there and drink a glass.

On entering, I found a long room, deserted and dismal, which the dazzling light, entering through three curtainless windows, rendered even more dismal and deserted. A few rickety tables, on which stood broken glasses dull with dust, a dilapidated billiard-table, holding out its four pockets as if asking alms, a yellow couch, an old desk, slumbered there in an oppressive and unhealthy heat. And the flies! flies everywhere! I had never seen so many: on the ceiling, clinging to the windows, in the glasses, in swarms. When I opened the door, there was a buzzing, a humming of wings as if I were entering a hive.

At the end of the room, in a window-recess,

there was a woman standing close to the window, busily occupied in looking out. I called her twice:

"Ho there! hostess!"

She turned slowly, and showed me the face of a poverty-stricken peasant woman, wrinkled and furrowed, earth-coloured, framed by long lappets of rusty lace, such as the old women in our neighbourhood wear. She was not an old woman, though; but much weeping had faded her completely.

"What do you want?" she asked, wiping her eyes.

"To sit down a moment and drink something."

She gazed at me in amazement, without moving from her place, as if she did not understand me.

"Is n't this an inn?"

The woman sighed.

"Yes, it is an inn, if you choose. But why don't you go opposite, like all the rest? It is much more lively."

"It is too lively for me. I prefer to stay here with you."

And without waiting for her reply, I seated myself at the table.

When she was quite sure that I was speaking seriously, the hostess began to go and come with a very busy air, opening doors, moving bottles, wiping glasses, and disturbing the flies. It was clear that a guest to wait upon was an important event. At times the unhappy creature would stop and take her head in her hands, as if she despaired of ever accomplishing anything.

Then she went into the rear room; I heard her shaking great keys, fumbling with locks, looking into the bread-box, blowing, dusting, washing plates. From time to time a deep sigh, a sob ill stifled.

After a quarter of an hour of this business, I had before me a plate of raisins, an old loaf of Beaucaire bread, as hard as sandstone, and a bottle of sour new wine.

"You are served," said the strange creature;

and she turned back at once to her place at the window.

As I drank, I tried to make her talk.

"You don't often have people here, do you, my poor woman?"

"Oh, no! never any one, monsieur. When we were alone here, it was different; we had the relay, we provided hunt-dinners during the ducking-season, and carriages all the year round. But since our neighbours set up in business, we have lost everything. People prefer to go opposite. They consider it too dull here. It 's a fact that the house is n't very pleasant. I am not good-looking, I have fever and ague, and my two little girls are dead. Over yonder, on the contrary, they are laughing all the time. It is a woman from Arles who keeps the inn, a handsome woman with laces, and three bands of gold beads round her neck. The driver of the diligence, who is her lover, takes it to her place. And then she has a lot of hussies for chamber-maids, so that she gets lots of custom! She

has all the young men from Bezouces, Redessan, and Jonquières. The carters go out of their way to pass her house. And I stay here all day without a soul, eating my heart out."

She said this in a distraught, indifferent tone, with her forehead still resting against the glass. There was evidently something which interested her at the inn opposite.

Suddenly, on the other side of the road, there was a great commotion. The diligence moved off through the dust. I heard the cracking of the whip, the postillion's bugle, and the girls who had run to the door calling out: *"Adiousias! adiousias!"* And over it all the stentorian voice that I had heard before, beginning again, louder than ever:

> "She took her silver pitcher,
> And went off to the well;
> From there she could not see
> Three soldiers drawing near."

At that voice the hostess trembled in every limb, and, turning to me, she said in an undertone:

"Do you hear? That's my husband. Does n't he sing well?"

I gazed at her in stupefaction.

"What? Your husband? Do you mean to say that he goes there too?"

Thereupon, with a heart-broken air, but with the utmost gentleness, she replied:

"What can you expect, monsieur? Men are made that way; they don't like to see people cry; and I cry all the time since my little girls died. And then this great barrack, where nobody ever comes, is so melancholy. And so, when he is bored too much, my poor José goes across the road to drink, and as he has a fine voice, the woman from Arles makes him sing. Hush! there he goes again."

And she stood there, as if in a trance, trembling, with her hands outstretched, and tears rolling down her cheeks, which made her look uglier than ever, to hear her José singing for the woman from Arles:

"The first one said to her:
'Good day, my pretty dear!'"

The Elixir of the Reverend Father Gaucher

The Elixir of the Reverend Father Gaucher

"DRINK this, neighbour, and tell me what you think of it."

And drop by drop, with the painstaking care of a lapidary counting pearls, the curé of Graveson poured out for me two fingers of a golden-green, warm, sparkling, exquisite liqueur. My stomach was as if bathed in sunlight.

"This is Father Gaucher's elixir, the joy and health of our Provence," said the worthy man, with a triumphant air; "it is made at the convent of Prémontrés, two leagues from your mill. Is n't it better than all the chartreuses on earth? And if you knew how interesting the story of this elixir is! Listen."

Thereupon, as artlessly as possible, without the slightest tinge of irony, in that parson-

age dining-room, so placid and calm, with its *Road to the Cross* in tiny pictures, and its pretty light curtains ironed like surplices, the abbé began a somewhat skeptical and irreverent anecdote, after the fashion of a tale of Erasmus or d'Assoucy.

"Twenty years ago, the Prémontrés, or the White Fathers, as we Provençals call them, had fallen into utter destitution. If you had seen their convent in those days, it would have made your heart ache.

"The high wall, the Pacôme Tower, were falling in pieces. All around the grass-grown cloisters, the pillars were cracked, the stone saints crumbling in their recesses. Not a stained-glass window whole, not a door that would close. In the courtyards, in the chapels, the wind from the Rhône blew as it blows in Camargue, extinguishing the candles, breaking the leaden sashes of the windows, spilling the water from the holy-water vessels. But the saddest of all was the convent belfry,

silent as an empty dove-cote; and the fathers, in default of money to buy a bell, were obliged to ring for matins with clappers of almond-wood!

"Poor White Fathers! I can see them now, in the procession on Corpus Christi, pacing sadly along in their patched hoods, pale and thin, fed on pumpkins and water-melons; and behind them monseigneur the abbé, marching with downcast head, ashamed to exhibit in the sunlight his tarnished crook and his worm-eaten mitre of white wool. The ladies of the fraternity wept with compassion in the ranks, and the stout banner-bearers whispered sneeringly to one another as they pointed to the poor monks:

"'The starlings grow thin when they fly in flocks.'

"The fact is, the unfortunate White Fathers had reached the point where they asked themselves if they would not do better to fly out into the world and to seek pasturage each for himself.

"Now, one day when this grave question was being discussed in the chapter, the prior was informed that Brother Gaucher desired to be heard in the council. I must say for your information that this Brother Gaucher was the drover of the convent; that is to say, he passed his days waddling from arch to arch through the cloister, driving before him two consumptive cows, which tried to find grass between the cracks of the flagstones. Supported until he was twelve years old by an old madwoman of the Baux country, called Aunt Bégon, then taken in by the monks, the wretched drover had never been able to learn anything except to drive his beasts and to repeat his paternoster; and even that he said in Provençal, for his brain was thick and his mind as dull as a leaden dagger. A fervent Christian, however, although somewhat visionary, comfortable in his haircloth shirt, and inflicting discipline upon himself, with sturdy conviction, and such arms!

"When they saw him come into the chap-

ter-hall, simple and stupid of aspect, saluting the assemblage with a leg thrown back, prior, canons, steward, and everybody began to laugh. That was always the effect produced by that good-natured face with its grizzly, goatlike beard and its slightly erratic eyes, whenever it appeared anywhere; so that Brother Gaucher was not disturbed thereby.

"'Reverend fathers,' he said in a wheedling voice, playing with his chaplet of olive-stones, 'it is quite true that empty casks make the best music. Just imagine that, by dint of cudgelling my poor brain, which was already so hollow, I believe that I have thought out a way to help us out of our poverty.

"'This is how. You know Aunt Bégon, that worthy woman who took care of me when I was small—God rest her soul, the old hag! she used to sing some very vile songs after drinking.—I must tell you then, reverend fathers, that Aunt Bégon, in her lifetime, knew as much about the mountain herbs as an old

Corsican blackbird, and more. In fact, towards the end of her life, she compounded an incomparable elixir by mixing five or six kinds of simples that we picked together in the mountains. That was a good many years ago; but I believe that with the aid of St. Augustine and the permission of our worshipful abbé, I might, by careful search, discover the composition of that mysterious elixir. Then we should only have to bottle it and sell it at a rather high price, to enable the community to get rich as nicely as you please, like our brothers of La Trappe and La Grande——'

"He was not allowed to finish. The prior sprang to his feet and fell upon his neck. The canons seized his hands. The steward, even more deeply moved than all the rest, kissed respectfully the ragged edge of his cowl. Then they all returned to their chairs to deliberate; and the chapter decided on the spot that the cows should be intrusted to Brother Thrasybule, so that Brother Gaucher

might devote himself exclusively to the compounding of his elixir.

"How did the excellent monk succeed in discovering Aunt Bégon's recipe! At the price of what efforts, of what vigils? History does not say. But this much is sure, that after six months, the elixir of the White Fathers was very popular. Throughout the Comtat, in all the Arles country, there was not a farmhouse, not a granary, which had not in the depths of its buttery, amid the bottles of mulled wine and the jars of olives *à la picholine,* a little jug of brown earthenware, sealed with the arms of Provence, and with a monk in a trance on a silver label. Thanks to the popularity of its elixir, the convent of the Prémontrés grew rich very rapidly. The Pacôme Tower was rebuilt. The prior had a new mitre, the church some pretty stained windows; and in the fine openwork of the belfry, a whole legion of bells, large and small, burst forth one fine Easter

morning, jingling and chiming with all their might.

"As for Brother Gaucher, that unfortunate lay brother, whose rustic manners amused the chapter so much, was never spoken of in the convent. Henceforth they only knew the Reverend Father Gaucher, a man of brains and of great learning, who lived completely apart from the trivial and multifarious occupations of the cloister, and was shut up all day in his distillery, while thirty monks hunted the mountain for him, seeking fragrant herbs. That distillery which no one, not even the prior, had the right to enter, was an old abandoned chapel, at the end of the canons' garden. The simplicity of the worthy fathers had transformed it into something mysterious and redoubtable; and if by chance some audacious and inquisitive young monk happened to get as far as the rosework of the doorway, he retreated very quickly, terrified by the aspect of Father Gaucher, with his sorcerer's beard, leaning over his furnaces, scales in hand; and

all about him retorts of red sandstone, huge alembics, serpentine glasses, a whole strange outfit, flaming as if bewitched, in the red gleam of the stained-glass.

"At nightfall, when the last Angelus rang, the door of that abode of mystery would open softly, and the father would betake himself to the church for the evening service. You should have seen the welcome that he received when he passed through the monastery! The brethren drew up in two lines for him to pass. They said to one another:

"'Hush! he knows the secret!'

"The steward followed him and spoke to him with downcast eyes. Amid all this adulation, the father walked along, mopping his forehead, his broad-brimmed, three-cornered hat placed on the back of his head like a halo, glancing with an air of condescension at the great courtyards full of orange-trees, the blue roofs surmounted by new weather-vanes; and, in the cloister, glaringly white between the gracefully carved pillars, the monks, newly

dressed, marching two by two with placid faces.

"'They owe all this to me!' the father would say to himself; and every time, that thought caused his bosom to swell with pride.

"The poor man was well punished for it, as you will see.

"Imagine that one evening, during the service, he arrived in the church in a state of extraordinary excitement: red-faced, breathless, his hood awry, and so perturbed that when he took his holy-water he wet his sleeves to the elbow. They thought at first that his excitement was due to being late; but when they saw him make profound reverences to the organ and the galleries instead of saluting the main altar, when they saw him rush through the church like a gust of wind, wander about the choir for five minutes looking for his stall, and, when once seated, bow to the right and left with a beatific smile, a murmur of amaze-

ment ran through the three naves. From breviary to breviary the monks whispered:

"'What can be the matter with our Father Gaucher? What can be the matter with our Father Gaucher?'

"Twice the prior, in his annoyance, struck his crook on the flagstones to enjoin silence. In the choir the psalms continued; but the responses lacked vigour.

"Suddenly, in the very middle of the *Ave verum,* lo and behold Father Gaucher fell backward in his stall and chanted in a voice of thunder:

"'In Paris there is a White Father—
Patatin, patatan, tarabin, taraban.'"

"General consternation. Everybody rose.

"'Carry him away! he is possessed!' they cried.

"The canons crossed themselves. Monseigneur's crook waved frantically. But Father Gaucher neither saw nor heard anything; and two sturdy monks were obliged to drag him away through the small door of the choir,

struggling like one bewitched and continuing his *patatans* and his *tarabans* louder than ever.

"The next morning, at daybreak, the poor wretch was on his knees in the prior's oratory, confessing his sin with a flood of tears.

"'It was the elixir, monseigneur, it was the elixir that took me by surprise,' he said, beating his breast. And seeing him so heart-broken, so penitent, the good prior was deeply moved himself.

"'Come, come, Father Gaucher, calm yourself; all this will dry up like the dew in the sunshine. After all, the scandal was not so great as you think. To be sure there was a song which was a little — however, we must hope that the novices did not hear it. Now, tell me just how the thing happened to you. It was while you were trying the elixir, was it not? Your hand was a little too heavy. Yes, yes, I understand. It was like Brother Schwartz, the inventor of powder; you were the victim of your invention. And tell me,

my dear friend, is it really necessary that you should try this terrible elixir upon yourself?'

"'Unluckily, yes, monseigneur. The test-tube, to be sure, gives me the strength and degree of heat of the alcohol; but for the finishing touch, the velvety smoothness, I can trust nothing but my tongue.'

"'Ah! very good. But listen to what I ask. When you taste the elixir thus as a duty, does it taste good to you? Do you enjoy it?'

"'Alas! yes, monseigneur,' said the unhappy father, turning as red as a beet; 'for two evenings now I have found such a bouquet, such an aroma in it! It is certainly the devil who has played me this vile trick. So I have determined only to use the test-tube henceforth. If the liqueur is not as fine, if it is not as smooth as before, so much the worse!'

"'Do nothing of the sort,' interrupted the prior, earnestly. 'We must not take the risk of displeasing our customers. All that you have to do now that you are warned is to be on your guard. Tell me, how much do you

need to drink, for your test? Fifteen or twenty drops, is it not? Let us say twenty drops. The devil will be very smart if he can catch you with twenty drops. Moreover, to avert all chance of accident, I excuse you from coming to church henceforth. You will repeat the evening service in the distillery. And now, go in peace, my father, and above all things count your drops carefully.'

"Alas! the poor father counted his drops to no purpose; the demon had him in his clutch, and he did not let him go.

"The distillery heard some strange services!

"In the daytime everything went well. The father was tranquil enough; he prepared his retorts, his alembics, carefully assorted his herbs —all Provençal herbs, fine and gray, and burned with perfume and sunlight. But at night, when the simples were steeped and the elixir was cooling in great basins of red copper, the poor man's martyrdom began.

"'Seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty.'

"The drops fell from the tube into the silver goblet. Those twenty, the father swallowed at one draught, almost without enjoyment. It was only the twenty-first that aroused his longing. Oh! that twenty-first drop! To avoid temptation, he would go and kneel at the end of the laboratory and bury himself in his paternosters. But from the still warm liqueur there ascended a wreath of smoke heavily laden with aromatic odours, which came prowling about him, and drew him back towards the basins, whether he would or no. The liqueur was a beautiful golden-green. Leaning over it, with distended nostrils, the father stirred it gently with his tube, and it seemed to him that he saw, in the sparkling little spangles on the surface of the emerald lake, Aunt Bégon's eyes laughing and snapping as they looked at him.

"'Nonsense! just one more drop!'

"And from drop to drop the poor wretch ended by filling his goblet to the brim. Then,

at the end of his strength, he would sink down in an easy-chair; and his body relaxed, his eyes half closed, he would enjoy his sin by little sips, murmuring to himself with ecstatic remorse:

"'Ah! I am damning myself! I am damning myself!'

"The most terrible part of it was, that in the depths of that diabolical elixir, he remembered, by some witchery or other, all Aunt Bégon's naughty songs: 'There were three little gossips, who talked of giving a feast'; or, 'Master André's shepherdess goes to the woods alone'; and always the famous one of the White Fathers: 'Patatin, patatan!'

"Imagine his confusion the next day when his old neighbours said to him with a sly expression:

"'Ha! ha! Father Gaucher, you had grasshoppers in your head when you went to bed last night.'

"Then there were tears, despair, fasting, haircloth, and penance. But nothing could

prevail against the demon of the elixir; and every evening, at the same hour, the possession began anew.

"Meanwhile, orders rained upon the abbey like a blessing from Heaven. They came from Nîmes, from Aix, from Avignon, from Marseille. From day to day the convent assumed the aspect of a factory. There were packing brothers, labelling brothers, brothers to attend to the correspondence, drayman brothers; the service of God lost a few strokes of the bell now and then, to be sure, but the poor people of the neighbourhood lost nothing, I assure you.

"But one fine Sunday morning, while the steward was reading to the chapter his annual inventory, and the good canons were listening with sparkling eyes and smiling lips, behold Father Gaucher rushed into the midst of the conference, exclaiming:

"'It is all over! I can't stand it any longer! give me back my cows.'

"'What is the matter, pray, Father Gaucher?' asked the prior, who had a shrewd idea what the matter might be.

"'The matter, monseigneur? The matter is that I am laying up for myself an eternity of hell-fire and blows with the pitchfork. The matter is that I am drinking, drinking like a miserable wretch.'

"'But I told you to count your drops.'

"'Count my drops! Oh, yes! I should have to count them by goblets now. Yes, my fathers, I have reached that point. Three flasks an evening. You must see that that cannot last. So let whomsoever you choose make the elixir. May God's fire consume me if I touch it again!'

"The chapter laughed no longer.

"'But you are ruining us, unhappy man!' cried the steward, waving his ledger.

"'Do you prefer that I should damn myself forever?'

"Thereupon the prior rose.

"'My fathers,' he said, putting forth his

beautiful white hand, upon which the pastoral ring glistened, 'there is a way to arrange everything. It is at night, is it not, my dear son, that the demon tempts you?'

"'Yes, monsieur prior, regularly every evening. So now, when night comes, a cold sweat takes me, saving your presence, like Capitou's donkey when he saw the saddle coming.'

"''T is well! be comforted. Henceforth, every evening, at the service, we will repeat in your favour the prayer of St. Augustine, to which plenary indulgence is attached. With that, whatever happens, you are safe. It affords absolution during sin.'

"'Oh well! in that case, thanks, monsieur prior!'

"And, without asking anything more, Father Gaucher returned to his laboratory, as light-hearted as a lark.

"And in truth, from that day forward, every evening at the end of the complines, the officiating father never failed to say:

"'Let us pray for our poor Father Gaucher, who is sacrificing his soul in the interest of the community. *Oremus, Domine* ——'

"And while the prayer ran quivering over those white hoods, prostrate in the shadow of the nave, as a light breeze rushes over the snow, yonder at the other end of the convent, behind the flaming stained-glass of the distillery, Father Gaucher could be heard singing at the top of his lungs:

"'In Paris there is a White Father,
Patatin, patatan, tarabin, taraban;
In Paris there is a White Father
Who dances with the nuns,
Trin, trin, trin, in a garden,
Who dances with the——'"

Here the good curé stopped, in dismay.

"Merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, "suppose my parishioners should hear me!"

Monday Tales

(1873)

The Last Class

The Last Class

The Story of a Little Alsatian

I WAS very late for school that morning, and I was terribly afraid of being scolded, especially as Monsieur Hamel had told us that he should examine us on participles, and I did not know the first thing about them. For a moment I thought of staying away from school and wandering about the fields. It was such a warm, lovely day. I could hear the blackbirds whistling on the edge of the wood, and in the Rippert field, behind the sawmill, the Prussians going through their drill. All that was much more tempting to me than the rules concerning participles; but I had the strength to resist, and I ran as fast as I could to school.

As I passed the mayor's office, I saw that there were people gathered about the little

board on which notices were posted. For two years all our bad news had come from that board—battles lost, conscriptions, orders from headquarters; and I thought without stopping:

"What can it be now?"

Then, as I ran across the square, Wachter the blacksmith, who stood there with his apprentice, reading the placard, called out to me:

"Don't hurry so, my boy; you'll get to your school soon enough!"

I thought that he was making fun of me, and I ran into Monsieur Hamel's little yard all out of breath.

Usually, at the beginning of school, there was a great uproar which could be heard in the street, desks opening and closing, lessons repeated aloud in unison, with our ears stuffed in order to learn quicker, and the teacher's stout ruler beating on the desk:

"A little more quiet!"

I counted on all this noise to reach my

bench unnoticed; but as it happened, that day everything was quiet, like a Sunday morning. Through the open window I saw my comrades already in their places, and Monsieur Hamel walking back and forth with the terrible iron ruler under his arm. I had to open the door and enter, in the midst of that perfect silence. You can imagine whether I blushed and whether I was afraid!

But no! Monsieur Hamel looked at me with no sign of anger and said very gently:

"Go at once to your seat, my little Frantz; we were going to begin without you."

I stepped over the bench and sat down at once at my desk. Not until then, when I had partly recovered from my fright, did I notice that our teacher had on his handsome blue coat, his plaited ruff, and the black silk embroidered breeches, which he wore only on days of inspection or of distribution of prizes. Moreover, there was something extraordinary, something solemn about the whole class. But what surprised me most was to see at the

back of the room, on the benches which were usually empty, some people from the village sitting, as silent as we were: old Hauser with his three-cornered hat, the ex-mayor, the ex-postman, and others besides. They all seemed depressed; and Hauser had brought an old spelling-book with gnawed edges, which he held wide-open on his knee, with his great spectacles askew.

While I was wondering at all this, Monsieur Hamel had mounted his platform, and in the same gentle and serious voice with which he had welcomed me, he said to us:

"My children, this is the last time that I shall teach you. Orders have come from Berlin to teach nothing but German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new teacher arrives to-morrow. This is the last class in French, so I beg you to be very attentive."

Those few words overwhelmed me. Ah! the villains! that was what they had posted at the mayor's office.

The Last Class

My last class in French!

And I barely knew how to write! So I should never learn! I must stop short where I was! How angry I was with myself because of the time I had wasted, the lessons I had missed, running about after nests, or sliding on the Saar! My books, which only a moment before I thought so tiresome, so heavy to carry — my grammar, my sacred history — seemed to me now like old friends, from whom I should be terribly grieved to part. And it was the same about Monsieur Hamel. The thought that he was going away, that I should never see him again, made me forget the punishments, the blows with the ruler.

Poor man! It was in honour of that last lesson that he had put on his fine Sunday clothes; and I understood now why those old fellows from the village were sitting at the end of the room. It seemed to mean that they regretted not having come oftener to the school. It was also a way of thanking our

teacher for his forty years of faithful service, and of paying their respects to the fatherland which was vanishing.

I was at that point in my reflections, when I heard my name called. It was my turn to recite. What would I not have given to be able to say from beginning to end that famous rule about participles, in a loud, distinct voice, without a slip! But I got mixed up at the first words, and I stood there swaying against my bench, with a full heart, afraid to raise my head. I heard Monsieur Hamel speaking to me:

"I will not scold you, my little Frantz; you must be punished enough; that is the way it goes; every day we say to ourselves: 'Pshaw! I have time enough. I will learn to-morrow.' And then you see what happens. Ah! it has been the great misfortune of our Alsace always to postpone its lessons until to-morrow. Now those people are entitled to say to us: 'What! you claim to be French, and you can neither speak nor write your language!'

In all this, my poor Frantz, you are not the guiltiest one. We all have our fair share of reproaches to address to ourselves.

"Your parents have not been careful enough to see that you were educated. They preferred to send you to work in the fields or in the factories, in order to have a few more sous. And have I nothing to reproach myself for? Have I not often made you water my garden instead of studying? And when I wanted to go fishing for trout, have I ever hesitated to dismiss you?"

Then, passing from one thing to another, Monsieur Hamel began to talk to us about the French language, saying that it was the most beautiful language in the world, the most clear, the most substantial; that we must always retain it among ourselves, and never forget it, because when a people falls into servitude, "so long as it clings to its language, it is as if it held the key to its prison." [1] Then

[1] "S'il tient sa langue, il tient la clé qui de ses chaînes le délivre."—Mistral.

he took the grammar and read us our lesson. I was amazed to see how readily I understood. Everything that he said seemed so easy to me, so easy. I believed, too, that I had never listened so closely, and that he, for his part, had never been so patient with his explanations. One would have said that, before going away, the poor man desired to give us all his knowledge, to force it all into our heads at a single blow.

When the lesson was at an end, we passed to writing. For that day Monsieur Hamel had prepared some entirely new examples, on which was written in a fine, round hand: "France, Alsace, France, Alsace." They were like little flags, waving all about the class, hanging from the rods of our desks. You should have seen how hard we all worked and how silent it was! Nothing could be heard save the grinding of the pens over the paper. At one time some cockchafers flew in; but no one paid any attention to them, not even the little fellows, who

were struggling with their straight lines, with a will and conscientious application, as if even the lines were French. On the roof of the schoolhouse, pigeons cooed in low tones, and I said to myself as I listened to them:

"I wonder if they are going to compel them to sing in German too!"

From time to time, when I raised my eyes from my paper, I saw Monsieur Hamel sitting motionless in his chair and staring at the objects about him as if he wished to carry away in his glance the whole of his little schoolhouse. Think of it! For forty years he had been there in the same place, with his yard in front of him and his class just as it was! But the benches and desks were polished and rubbed by use; the walnuts in the yard had grown, and the hop-vine which he himself had planted now festooned the windows even to the roof. What a heart-rending thing it must have been for that poor man to leave all those things, and to hear his sister walking back and forth in the room

overhead, packing their trunks! For they were to go away the next day — to leave the province forever.

However, he had the courage to keep the class to the end. After the writing, we had the lesson in history; then the little ones sang all together the *ba, be, bi, bo, bu.* Yonder, at the back of the room, old Hauser had put on his spectacles, and, holding his spelling-book in both hands, he spelled out the letters with them. I could see that he too was applying himself. His voice shook with emotion, and it was so funny to hear him, that we all longed to laugh and to cry. Ah! I shall remember that last class.

Suddenly the church clock struck twelve, then the Angelus rang. At the same moment, the bugles of the Prussians returning from drill blared under our windows. Monsieur Hamel rose, pale as death, from his chair. Never had he seemed to me so tall.

"My friends," he said, "my friends, I — I ——"

But something suffocated him. He could not finish the sentence.

Thereupon he turned to the blackboard, took a piece of chalk, and, bearing on with all his might, he wrote in the largest letters he could:

"VIVE LA FRANCE!"

Then he stood there, with his head resting against the wall, and without speaking, he motioned to us with his hand:

"That is all; go."

The Game of Billiards

The Game of Billiards

AS they have been fighting two days, and have passed the night with their knapsacks on, beneath a flood of rain, the soldiers are completely exhausted. And yet for three mortal hours they have been left waiting, with grounded arms, in the puddles of the highroads and the mud of the saturated fields.

Benumbed by fatigue, by sleepless nights, and with their uniforms drenched with rain, they crowd together to warm and comfort one another. There are some who sleep standing, leaning against a neighbour's knapsack, and weariness and privations can be read distinctly upon those relaxed faces, overcome with sleep. Rain, mud, no fire, nothing to eat, a low, black sky, and the enemy in the air about. It is funereal.

What are they doing there? What is going on? The guns, with their muzzles pointed

towards the wood, have the appearance of watching something. The mitrailleurs in ambush stare fixedly at the horizon. Everything seems ready for an attack. Why do they not attack? What are they waiting for?

They are awaiting orders, and headquarters sends none.

And yet the headquarters are not far away. They are at yonder stately Louis-Treize château, whose red bricks, scoured by the rain, glisten among the trees half-way up the hill. Truly a princely dwelling, quite worthy to bear the banner of a marshal of France. Behind a broad moat and a stone wall which separate them from the road, smooth green lawns, lined with vases of flowers, extend to the porch. On the other side, the private side of the house, the hornbeam hedges show luminous gaps; the pond in which swans are swimming lies like a mirror, and beneath the pagodalike roof of an enormous aviary, peacocks and golden pheasants flash their wings and display their plumage, uttering shrill cries

amid the foliage. Although the owners have gone away, one does not feel the abandonment, the desolation of war. The oriflamme of the leader of the army has safeguarded even the tiniest flowers in the lawns, and it is an impressive thing to find so near the battle-field that opulent tranquillity that is born of perfect order, of the accurate alignment of the shrubbery, of the silent depths of the avenues.

The rain, which fills the roads yonder with such disgusting mud, and digs such deep ruts, here is nothing more than an elegant, aristocratic shower, reviving the red of the bricks and the green of the lawns, polishing the leaves of the orange-trees and the white feathers of the swans. Everything glistens, everything is peaceful. Really, but for the flag floating on the roof, but for the two soldiers on sentry-go before the gate, one would never suspect that it is the headquarters of an army. The horses are resting in the stables. Here and there one sees a groom, or an orderly in undress uniform,

loitering about the kitchen, or a gardener in red trousers placidly drawing his rake over the gravel in the great courtyards.

The dining-room, the windows of which look upon the porch, discloses a half-cleared table; uncorked bottles, soiled and empty glasses on the rumpled cloth; the end of a banquet, after the guests have gone. In the adjoining room one may hear loud voices, laughter, the clicking of balls and the clinking of glasses. The marshal is playing his game of billiards, and that is why the army is waiting for orders. When the marshal had begun his game, the heavens might fall, but nothing in the world could prevent him from finishing it.

Billiards! that is the weakness of that great warrior. He stands there, as grave as in battle, in full uniform, his breast covered with medals, with kindled eyes, flushed cheeks, excited by feasting, grog, and the game. His aides-de-camp surround him, zealous and respectful, uttering admiring exclamations at

each of his strokes. When the marshal makes a point, they all hasten to mark it; when the marshal is thirsty, they all rush to prepare his grog. There is a constant rustling of epaulettes and plumes, a jingling of medals; and to see all those sweet smiles, those artful, courtierlike reverences, all those new uniforms and embroidery in that lofty apartment, with its oaken wainscoting, looking upon parks and courts of honour, recalls the autumn days at Compiègne, and affords the eyes a little rest from the stained cloaks that shiver yonder along the roads, forming such sombre groups in the rain.

The marshal's opponent is a young captain of the staff, belted and curled and light-gloved, who is in the first rank of billiard-players and capable of beating all the marshals on earth; but he has the tact to keep a respectful distance behind his chief, and devotes his energies to the task of not winning, and at the same time not losing too easily. He is what is called an officer with a future.

Attention, young man, let us be on our guard! The marshal has fifteen, and you ten. The point is to keep the game in that condition to the end; then you will have done more for your promotion than if you were outside with the others, beneath those torrents of water which drown the horizon, soiling your natty uniform, tarnishing the gold of your aiguillettes, awaiting orders which do not come.

It is really an interesting game. The balls roll and clash and mingle their colours. The cushions send them merrily back; the cloth waxes hot. Suddenly the flash of a cannon-shot passes across the sky. A dull sound rattles the windows. Everybody starts, and they look at each other anxiously. The marshal alone has neither seen nor heard anything; leaning over the table, he is busily engaged in planning a magnificent draw-shot; draw-shots are his strong point.

But there comes another flash, then another. The cannon-shots succeed each other in hot

haste. The aides-de-camp run to the windows. Can it be that the Prussians are attacking.

"Very well, let them attack!" says the marshal, chalking his cue. "It 's your turn, captain."

The staff quivers with admiration. Turenne asleep upon a gun-carriage was nothing compared to this marshal, who plays billiards so tranquilly at the moment of going into action. Meanwhile the uproar redoubles. With the roar of the cannon is mingled the tearing sound of the mitrailleuses, the rattle of musketry. A red steam, black at the edges, rises around the lawns. The whole park is on fire. The terrified peacocks and pheasants shriek in the aviary; the Arabian horses, smelling the powder, rear in the stables. The headquarters begins to be excited. Despatch after despatch. Couriers arrive at full speed. They ask for the marshal.

The marshal cannot be seen. Did I not

tell you that nothing could prevent him from finishing his game?

"It is your turn, captain."

But the captain is distraught. That is what it is to be young. Behold he loses his head, forgets his tactics, and makes two runs in succession, which almost give him the game. Thereupon the marshal becomes furious. Surprise and indignation animate his manly face. Just at this moment a horse ridden at a hard gallop rushes into the courtyard. An aide-de-camp covered with mud forces his way past the sentries and ascends the steps at one bound. "Marshal, marshal!" You should see how he is greeted. Puffing with anger and red as a rooster, the marshal appears at the window, his billiard-cue in his hand:

"What 's the matter? What 's all this? Is n't there any sentry there?"

"But, marshal——"

"All right, in a moment; wait for my orders, in God's name!"

And the window is violently closed.

Wait for his orders! That is just what they are doing, the poor fellows. The wind drives the rain and the grape-shot full in their faces. Whole battalions are wiped out, while others stand useless, with their arms in readiness, utterly unable to understand their inaction. Nothing to do. They are awaiting orders. However, as one needs no orders to die, the men fall by hundreds behind the shrubs, in the moats, in front of the great silent château. Even after they have fallen, the grape tears them still, and from the open wounds the generous blood of France flows noiselessly. Above, in the billiard-room, it is getting terribly warm too; the marshal has recovered his lead, but the little captain is defending himself like a lion.

Seventeen! eighteen! nineteen!

They hardly have time to mark the points. The roar of the battle draws nearer. The marshal has but one more to go. Already shells are falling in the park. Suddenly one bursts over the pond. The mirror is shattered;

a swan in deadly alarm swims wildly about amid an eddy of bloody feathers. That is the last stroke.

Then, a profound silence. Only the rain falling on the hedges, a confused rumbling at the foot of the hill, and, along the muddy roads, a sound like the trampling of a hurrying flock. The army is in full retreat. The marshal has won his game.

The Child Spy

The Child Spy

HIS name was Stenne, little Stenne.

He was a child of Paris, sickly and pale, who might have been ten years old, perhaps fifteen; with those urchins one can never tell. His mother was dead; his father, formerly in the navy, was keeper of a square in the Temple quarter. Babies, nurse-maids, old ladies in reclining-chairs, poor mothers, all of toddling Paris that seeks shelter from vehicles in those flower-gardens bordered by paths, knew Father Stenne and adored him. They knew that beneath that rough mustache, the terror of dogs and of loiterers, lay concealed a kind, melting, almost maternal smile, and that, in order to see that smile, one had only to ask the good man:

"How 's your little boy?"

Father Stenne was so fond of his boy! He was so happy in the afternoon, after school,

when the little fellow came for him and they made together the circuit of the paths, stopping at each bench to salute the occupants and to answer their kind words.

Unfortunately with the siege everything changed. Father Stenne's square was closed, petroleum was stored there, and the poor man, forced to keep watch all the time, passed his life among the deserted and neglected shrubs, alone, unable to smoke, and without the company of his boy except very late at night, at home. So that you should have seen his mustache when he mentioned the Prussians. As for little Stenne, he did not complain very much of that new life.

A siege! It is such an amusing thing for urchins. No school! No lessons! Vacation all the time and the street like a fair.

The child stayed out of doors, wandering about until night. He followed the battalions of the quarter when they went to the fortifications, choosing by preference those which had a good band; and upon that subject little

Stenne was well posted. He could tell you that the band of the 96th did not amount to much, but that in the 55th they had a fine one. At other times he watched the troops go through the drill; then there were the lines at the shop-doors.

With his basket on his arm, he stood in the long lines that formed in the dark winter mornings, without gas, at the doors of the butchers' and bakers' shops. There, with their feet in the water, people became acquainted, talked politics, and every one asked his advice, as M. Stenne's son. But the games of *bouchon* were the most amusing thing of all, and that famous game of *galoche,* which the Breton militia had brought into fashion during the siege. When little Stenne was not at the fortifications, or at the baker's, you were sure to find him at the game on Place du Château d'Eau. He did not play, you understand; it required too much money. He contented himself with watching the players, with such eyes!

One especially, a tall youth in a blue blouse, who bet nothing less than five-franc pieces, aroused his admiration. When he ran you could hear the money jingling in his pockets.

One day, as he picked up a coin which had rolled to little Stenne's feet, the tall youth said to him in an undertone:

"That makes you squint, eh? Well, I will tell you where they are to be found, if you want."

When the game was ended he led him to a corner of the square and proposed to him to go with him to sell newspapers to the Prussians; he received thirty francs per trip. At first Stenne refused, highly indignant; and he actually stayed away from the game for three days. Three terrible days. He did not eat, he did not sleep. At night, he saw piles of *galoches* at the foot of his bed, and five-franc pieces lying flat, all glistening. The temptation was too great. On the fourth day he returned to the Château d' Eau, saw the tall youth again, and allowed himself to be persuaded.

The Child Spy

They set out one snowy morning, a canvas bag over their shoulders and newspapers hidden under their blouses. When they reached the Flanders gate it was barely light. The tall youth took Stenne by the hand, and, approaching the sentry—an honest volunteer with a red nose and a good-natured expression—he said to him in the whining voice of a pauper:

"Let us pass, my kind monsieur. Our mother is sick, papa is dead, I am going out with my little brother to pick up potatoes in the fields."

And he wept. Stenne, covered with shame, hung his head. The sentry looked at them a moment, and cast a glance at the deserted road.

"Hurry up," he said, stepping aside; and there they were upon the Aubervilliers Road. How the tall fellow laughed!

Confusedly, as in a dream, little Stenne saw factories transformed into barracks, abandoned barricades covered with wet rags, long

chimneys cutting the mist and rising into the sky, smokeless and broken. At intervals, a sentry, beplumed officers looking into the distance with field-glasses, and small tents drenched with melted snow in front of dying fires. The tall fellow knew the roads and cut across the fields to avoid the outposts. However, they fell in with a patrol of sharp-shooters, whom they could not avoid. The sharp-shooters were in their little cabins, perched on the edge of a ditch filled with water, along the Soisson railroad. That time the tall fellow repeated his story in vain; they would not allow them to pass. Then, while he was complaining, an old sergeant, all wrinkled and grizzled, who resembled Father Stenne, came out of the guard-house to the road.

"Come, little brats, I would n't cry!" he said to the children; "we 'll let you go to get your potatoes, but come in and warm yourselves a little first. This little fellow looks as if he was frozen!"

Alas! It was not with cold that little Stenne was trembling—it was with fear, with shame. In the guard-house they found several soldiers crouching about a paltry fire, a genuine widow's fire, by the heat of which they were thawing out biscuit on the points of their bayonets. They moved closer together to make room for the children. They gave them a little coffee. While they were drinking, an officer came to the door, called to the sergeant, spoke to him in an undertone and hurried away.

"My boys," said the sergeant, returning with a radiant face, "there will be something up to-night. They have found out the Prussians' countersign. I believe that this time we shall capture that infernal Bourget again."

There was an explosion of cheers and laughter. They danced and sang and brandished their sword-bayonets; and the children, taking advantage of the tumult, disappeared.

When they had passed the railway there was nothing before them but a level plain, and

in the distance a long, blank wall, riddled with loopholes. It was towards that wall that they bent their steps, stooping constantly to make it appear that they were picking up potatoes.

"Let's go back, let's not go on," said little Stenne again and again.

The other shrugged his shoulders and kept on. Suddenly they heard the click of a gun being cocked.

"Lie down!" said the tall fellow, throwing himself on the ground.

When they were down, he whistled. Another whistle answered over the snow. They crawled on. In front of the wall, level with the ground, appeared a pair of yellow mustaches beneath a soiled cap. The tall youth jumped into the trench, beside the Prussian.

"This is my brother," he said, pointing to his companion.

Little Stenne was so little, that at the sight of him the Prussian began to laugh, and he was obliged to take him in his arms to lift him up to the breach.

On the other side of the wall were great piles of earth, felled trees, black holes in the snow, and in each hole the same dirty cap and the same yellow mustaches, laughing when they saw the children pass.

In the corner was a gardener's house casemated with trunks of trees. The lower room was full of soldiers playing cards, and cooking soup over a big, blazing fire. The cabbages and pork smelled good; what a contrast to the bivouac of the sharp-shooters! Above were the officers. They could hear them playing the piano and opening champagne. When the Parisians entered, a joyous cheer greeted them. They produced their newspapers; then they were given drink and were induced to talk. All the officers had a haughty and disdainful manner; but the tall youth amused them with his faubourgian wit, his street Arab's vocabulary. They laughed, repeated his phrases after him, and wallowed with delight in the Parisian mud which he brought them.

Little Stenne would have liked to talk too, to prove that he was not stupid, but something embarrassed him, Opposite him, apart from the rest, was an older and graver Prussian, who was reading, or rather seemed to be reading, for his eyes did not leave little Stenne. Affection and reproach were in his glance, as if he had at home a child of the same age as Stenne, and as if he were saying to himself:

"I would rather die than see my son engaged in such business."

From that moment Stenne felt as it were a hand resting on his heart, which prevented it from beating.

To escape that torture, he began to drink. Soon everything about him whirled around. He heard vaguely, amid loud laughter, his comrade making fun of the National Guards, of their manner of drilling; he imitated a call to arms in the Marais, a night alarm on the ramparts. Then the tall fellow lowered his voice, the officers drew nearer to him, and

their faces became serious. The villain was warning them of the attack of the sharp-shooters.

At that little Stenne sprang to his feet in a rage, thoroughly sober:

"Not that! I won't have it!"

But the other simply laughed and kept on. Before he had finished, all the officers were standing. One of them pointed to the door and said to the children:

"Clear out!"

And they began to talk among themselves very rapidly, in German.

The tall youth went out as proud as a prince, jingling his money. Stenne followed him, hanging his head; and when he passed the Prussian whose glance had embarrassed him so, he heard a sad voice say:

"Not a nice thing to do, that. Not a nice thing."

Tears came to his eyes.

Once in the field, the children began to run and returned quickly to the city. Their bag

was full of potatoes which the Prussians had given them. With them they passed unhindered to the trench of the sharp-shooters. There they were preparing for the night attack. Troops came up silently and massed behind the walls. The old sergeant was there, busily engaged in posting his men, with such a happy expression. When the children passed, he recognised them and bestowed a pleasant smile upon them.

Oh! how that smile hurt little Stenne! For a moment he was tempted to call out:

"Don't go there; we have betrayed you."

But the other had told him: "If you speak we shall be shot"; and fear restrained him.

At La Courneuve, they entered an abandoned house to divide the money. Truth compels me to state that the division was made honestly, and that little Stenne's crime did not seem so terrible to him when he heard the coins jingling under his blouse, and thought of the games of *galoche* which he had in prospect.

But when he was alone, the wretched child! When the tall fellow had left him at the gate, then his pockets began to be very heavy, and the hand that grasped his heart grasped it tighter than ever. Paris did not seem the same to him. The people who passed gazed sternly at him as if they knew whence he came. He heard the word "spy" in the rumbling of the wheels, in the beating of the drums along the canal. At last he reached home, and, overjoyed to find that his father was not there, he went quickly up to their room, to hide under his pillow that money that weighed so heavily upon him.

Never had Father Stenne been so joyous and so good-humoured as when he returned that night. News had been received from the provinces: affairs were looking better. As he ate, the old soldier looked at his musket hanging on the wall, and said to the child with his hearty laugh:

"I say, my boy, how you would go at the Prussians if you were big!"

About eight o'clock, they heard cannon.

"That is Aubervilliers. They are fighting at Bourget," said the good man, who knew all the forts. Little Stenne turned pale, and, on the plea that he was very tired, he went to bed; but he did not sleep. The cannon still roared. He imagined the sharp-shooters arriving in the dark to surprise the Prussians, and themselves falling into an ambush. He remembered the sergeant who had smiled at him and he saw him stretched out on the snow, and many others with him. The price of all that blood was concealed there under his pillow, and it was he, the son of Monsieur Stenne, of a soldier — tears choked him. In the adjoining room he heard his father walk to the window and open it. Below on the square, the recall was sounding; and a battalion was forming to leave the city. Evidently it was a real battle. The unhappy child could not restrain a sob.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Father Stenne as he entered the room.

The child could not stand it any longer; he leaped out of bed and threw himself at his father's feet. At the movement that he made the silver pieces rolled on the floor.

"What is all this? Have you been stealing?" demanded the old man, trembling.

Thereupon, without pausing for breath, little Stenne told him that he had been to the Prussian quarters and of what he had done there.

As he spoke, his heart felt freer; it relieved him to accuse himself. Father Stenne listened, with a terrible face. When it was at an end, he hid his face in his hands and wept.

"Father, father —" the child began.

The old man pushed him away without replying, and picked up the money.

"Is this all?" he asked.

Little Stenne motioned that it was all. The old man took down his musket and cartridge box, and said as he put the money in his pocket:

"All right; I am going to return it to them."

And without another word, without even turning his head, he went down and joined the troops who were marching away in the darkness. He was never seen again.

Mothers

Mothers

A Memory of the Siege

THAT morning I had gone to Mount Valérien to see our friend B——, the painter, a lieutenant in the battalion of the Seine. The excellent fellow happened to be on guard at the time. He could not leave his post. So we had to remain there, pacing back and forth like sailors on watch, in front of the postern of the fort, talking of Paris, of the war, and of our absent dear ones. Suddenly my lieutenant, who, beneath his soldier's tunic, had always remained the enthusiastic art student of the old days, interrupted me, struck an attitude, and seizing my arm, said to me in an undertone:

"Oh! what a fine Daumier!"

And while the corner of his little gray eye suddenly lighted up like the eye of a hunting-

dog, he pointed to two venerable silhouettes which had just made their appearance on the plateau of Mount Valérien.

A magnificent Daumier, in very truth. The man, in a long, chestnut-coloured coat, with a collar of greenish velvet that seemed to be made of old wood-moss; short and thin, with a red face, low forehead, round eyes, and a nose like an owl's beak. A wrinkled bird's face, solemn and stupid. To complete the picture, a bag of flowered carpet, from which protruded the neck of a bottle, and under the other arm a box of preserves, the everlasting tin box which no Parisian will ever be able to look upon again without thinking of the five months of siege. Of the woman we saw at first only an enormous cablike hat, and an old shawl wrapped tightly about her from neck to heels, as if sharply to outline her poverty; then, from time to time, between the faded ruffles of the hood, the sharp end of a nose peered out and a few poor, grizzled locks.

On reaching the plateau, the man stopped

to take breath and to wipe his forehead. It was not very hot up there in the late November fog, however; but they had come so fast.

The woman did not stop. Walking straight to the postern, she gazed at us a moment hesitatingly, as if she wished to speak to us; but, held in awe doubtless by the officer's straps, she preferred to apply to the sentinel, and I heard her timidly asking permission to see her son, a Parisian infantryman of the 6th Regiment of the Third.

"Stay here," said the sentry, "and I will send for him."

Overjoyed, she ran to her husband with a sigh of relief, and they sat down together on the edge of a slope.

They waited for a long while. Mount Valérien is so large, such a labyrinth of courtyards, of glacis, of bastions, of barracks and casemates! It is a hard task to find a soldier of the 6th in that entangled city, suspended between heaven and earth, and hovering in a spiral column amid the clouds, like the island of Laputa

—to say nothing of the fact that at that hour the fort was full of drums and trumpets, and soldiers running, and canteens jingling. The guard was being changed, the tasks allotted, and rations distributed; a spy covered with blood, driven in by sharp-shooters with the butts of their guns; peasants from Nanterre coming to complain to the general; an orderly arriving at a gallop, the man worn out, the horse steaming; and litters returning from the outposts, with the wounded swaying from side to side on the mules' backs and groaning softly like sick lambs; sailors hauling a new gun to the sound of fifes and cries of "Heave ho!" the flock of sheep belonging to the fort driven in by a shepherd in red trousers, with a switch in his hand and his helmet slung over his shoulder; all these going and coming, passing one another in the courtyards, disappearing under the postern, as through the low doorway of an Eastern caravansary.

"If only they don't forget my boy!" said the poor mother's eyes meanwhile; and every

five minutes she rose, walked softly towards the gate, cast a furtive glance into the outer courtyard, peering out from behind the wall; but she dared not ask any more questions for fear of making her child ridiculous. The man, who was even more timid than she, did not move from his corner, and each time that she returned to her seat with a heavy heart and a discouraged look, we could see that he scolded her for her impatience, and that he gave her abundant explanations about the needs of the service, with the gestures of a fool trying to play the pundit.

I have always been much interested in these silent scenes of private life, which one divines rather than sees, these pantomimes of the street which elbow you when you walk abroad, and reveal a whole existence with a gesture ; but what captivated me especially in this episode was the ingenuousness and awkwardness of the characters, and I was genuinely moved in following through their pantomime, as clear and expressive as the soul

of two of Seraphin's actors, all the changes of an interesting family drama.

I imagined the mother saying to herself one fine morning:

"I 'm tired of this General Trochu, with his orders. It 's three months since I 've seen my boy. I propose to go and embrace him."

The father, timid and awkward in the affairs of life, alarmed at the thought of the steps he would have to take to procure a permit, tried at first to argue with her:

"Why, you must n't think of such a thing, my dear! That Mount Valérien is as far away as the devil. How will you ever manage to get there, without a carriage? Besides, it 's a citadel! Women can't go in!"

"I will go in," said the mother; and as she does whatever she wishes, the man started off; he went to the *secteur*, to the mayor's office, to staff headquarters, to the commissary, perspiring with fear, freezing, running into everything, mistaking the door, waiting two hours in line at a department which

proved to be the wrong one. At last, at night, he returned with a permit from the governor in his pocket. The next day they rose early in the cold, by lamplight. The father broke the crust to warm himself, but the mother was not hungry. She preferred to breakfast yonder with her son. And to treat the poor soldier a little, they hurriedly piled in the basket the ban and arrière-ban of the siege provisions — chocolate, preserves, sealed wine, everything, even to the box, a box that cost eight francs, which they had treasured carefully for days of great want. And then they started. As they reached the ramparts, the gates were just opened. They had to show the permit. Then it was the mother who was frightened. But no, it seems that it was all right.

"Let them pass!" said the adjutant on duty.

Not until then did she breathe freely.

"That officer was very polite."

And away she trotted, as active as a partridge, in hot haste. The man could hardly keep up with her.

"How fast you go, my dear!"

But she did not listen. Up yonder, in the vapour of the horizon, Mount Valérien beckoned to her:

"Come quick, he is here."

And now that they had arrived, there was a new period of agony. Suppose they did not find him! Suppose he did not come!

Suddenly I saw her start, touch the old man's arm and spring to her feet. At a distance, under the arched postern, she had recognised his step.

It was he! When he appeared, the front of the fort was all lighted up by him. A tall, fine-looking fellow, on my word! Erect, with his knapsack on his back and his musket over his shoulder. He approached them, his face wreathed in smiles, and said in a manly, joyous voice:

"Good day, mother."

And instantly knapsack, coat, helmet, everything disappeared in the great cablike hat.

Then the father had his turn, but that was not long. The hat wanted everything for itself; it was insatiable.

"How are you? Are you warmly clothed? How are you off for linen?"

And I could feel, beneath the ruffles of the hood, the long, loving glance with which she enveloped him from head to foot, amid a rain of kisses, of tears, and of little laughs: the arrears of three months of motherly affection paid all at once. The father, too, was deeply moved, but he was determined not to show it. He realised that we were looking at him, and he winked in our direction, as if to say to us:

"Excuse her, she 's a woman."

Excuse her!

A bugle-blast suddenly blew cold upon that exuberant joy.

"There goes the recall," said the boy. "I must go."

"What! are n't you going to breakfast with us?"

"Why no! I can't. I am on duty for twenty-four hours, at the top of the fort."

"Oh!" exclaimed the poor woman; and she could say no more.

They stood for a moment looking at one another, all three, with an air of consternation. Then the father spoke.

"At least take the box," he said in a heartrending voice, with an expression of martyred gluttony, at once touching and comical. But lo, in the confusion and excitement of the parting, they could not find the cursed box; and it was pitiful to see those feverish, trembling hands seeking and groping; to hear those voices, broken with tears, ask: "The box? Where is the box?" with no shame at intruding that little housekeeping detail upon their great grief. When the box was found, there was a last long embrace and the son ran back into the fort.

Remember that they had come a long distance for that breakfast, that they had made a great occasion of it, that the mother had not

slept the night before; and tell me if you can imagine anything more heartrending than that abortive expedition, that corner of paradise barely glimpsed and suddenly closed so brutally.

They waited some time, without moving, on the same spot, with their eyes still fixed upon that postern through which their boy had disappeared. At last the man shook himself, turned half about, coughed two or three times with a very brave air, and said aloud and very jauntily, his voice steadied at last:

"Come, mother, let 's be off!"

Thereupon he made us a low bow and took his wife's arm. I followed them with my eyes to the bend in the road. The father acted like a madman. He brandished the basket with desperate gestures. The mother seemed calmer. She walked beside him with her head hanging, her arms close to her sides. But at times I fancied that I could see her shawl quiver convulsively on her narrow shoulders.

The Siege of Berlin

The Siege of Berlin

WE were going up Avenue des Champs-Élysées with Dr. V——, asking the shell-riddled walls, and the sidewalks torn up by grape-shot, for the story of the siege of Paris, when, just before we reached the Rond-point de l'Étoile, the doctor stopped and, pointing to one of the great corner houses so proudly grouped about the Arc de Triomphe, said to me:

"Do you see those four closed windows up there on that balcony? In the early days of August, that terrible August of last year, so heavily laden with storms and disasters, I was called there to see a case of apoplexy. It was the apartment of Colonel Jouve, a cuirassier of the First Empire, an old enthusiast on the subject of glory and patriotism, who had come to live on the Champs-Élysées, in an apartment with a balcony, at the outbreak of

the war. Guess why? In order to witness the triumphant return of our troops. Poor old fellow! The news of Wissembourg reached him just as he was leaving the table. When he read the name of Napoleon at the foot of that bulletin of defeat, he fell like a log.

"I found the former cuirassier stretched out at full length on the carpet, his face covered with blood, and as lifeless as if he had received a blow on the head from a poleaxe. He must have been very tall when he was standing; lying there, he looked enormous. Handsome features, magnificent teeth, a fleece of curly white hair, eighty years with the appearance of sixty. Beside him was his granddaughter, on her knees and bathed in tears. She looked like him. One who saw them side by side might have taken them for two beautiful Greek medallions, struck from the same die, one of which was old and earth-coloured, a little roughened on the edges, the other resplendent and clean-cut, in all the

brilliancy and smoothness of a fresh impression.

"The child's grief touched me. Daughter and granddaughter of soldiers, her father was on MacMahon's staff, and the image of that tall old man stretched out before her evoked in her mind another image no less terrible. I comforted her as best I could, but in reality I had little hope. We had to do with a case of complete paralysis of one side, and at eighty years of age few people recover from it. For three days the patient lay in the same state of inanition and stupor. Then the news of Reichshofen reached Paris. You remember in what a strange way it came. Up to the evening, we all believed in a great victory, twenty thousand Prussians killed and the Prince Royal a prisoner. I know not by what miracle, what magnetic current, an echo of that national rejoicing sought out our poor deaf-mute in the depths of his paralysis; but the fact is that on that evening, when I approached his bed, I did not find the same man

there. His eye was almost clear, his tongue less heavy. He had the strength to smile at me, and he stammered twice:

"'Vic-to-ry!'

"And as I gave him details of the grand exploit of MacMahon, I saw that his features relaxed and his face lighted up.

"When I left the room, the girl was waiting for me at the door, pale as death. She was sobbing.

"'But he is saved!' I said, taking her hands.

"The unhappy child hardly had the courage to reply. The true report of Reichshofen had been placarded; MacMahon in retreat, the whole army crushed. We gazed at each other in consternation. She was in despair, thinking of her father. I trembled, thinking of the old man. He certainly could not stand this fresh shock. And yet what were we to do. Leave him his joy, and the illusions which had revived him? But in that case we must lie.

"'Very well, I will lie!' said the heroic girl, quickly wiping away her tears; and with radiant face she entered her grandfather's chamber.

"It was a hard task that she had undertaken. The first few days she had no great difficulty. The good man's brain was feeble, and he allowed himself to be deceived like a child. But with returning health his ideas became clearer. We had to keep him posted concerning the movement of the armies, to draw up military bulletins for him. Really, it was pitiful to see that lovely child leaning night and day over her map of Germany, pinning little flags upon it, and struggling to lay out a glorious campaign: Bazaine besieging Berlin, Froissart in Bavaria, MacMahon on the Baltic. For all this she asked my advice, and I assisted her as well as I could; but it was the grandfather who was especially useful to us in that imaginary invasion. He had conquered Germany so many times under the First Empire! He knew all the strokes

beforehand: 'Now this is where they will go. Now this is what they will do'; and his anticipations were always realised, which did not fail to make him very proud.

"Unluckily it was of no avail for us to take cities and win battles; we never went quickly enough for him. That old man was insatiable! Every day, when I arrived, I learned of some new military exploit.

"'Doctor, we have taken Mayence,' the girl would say to me, coming to meet me with a heart-broken smile, and I would hear through the door a joyous voice shouting to me:

"'They are getting on! They are getting on! In a week we shall be in Berlin!'

"At that moment the Prussians were only a week's march from Paris. We asked ourselves at first if it would be better to take him into the provinces; but as soon as we were outside the city, the state of the country would have told him everything, and I considered him still too weak, too much benumbed by

his great shock, to let him know the truth. So we decided to remain.

"The first day of the investment of Paris, I went up to their rooms, I remember, deeply moved, with that agony at the heart which the closed gates, the fighting under the walls, and our suburbs turned into frontiers, gave us all. I found the good man seated on his bed, proud and jubilant.

"'Well,' he said, 'so the siege has begun!'

"I gazed at him in blank amazement.

"'What, colonel! you know'?

"His granddaughter turned towards me:

"'Why, yes, doctor, that 's the great news. The siege of Berlin has begun.'

"As she said this, she plied her needle with such a sedate and placid air! How could he have suspected anything? He could not hear the guns of the forts. He could not see our unfortunate Paris, all in confusion and dreadful to behold. What he saw from his bed was a section of the Arc de Triomphe, and in his room, about him, a collection of

bric-a-brac of the First Empire, well adapted to maintain his illusion. Portraits of marshals, engravings of battles, the King of Rome in a baby's dress, tall consoles adorned with copper trophies, laden with imperial relics, medals, bronzes, a miniature of St. Helena, under a globe, pictures representing the same lady all becurled, in a ball-dress of yellow, with leg-of-mutton sleeves and bright eyes;—and all these things: consoles, King of Rome, marshals, yellow ladies, with the high-necked, short-waisted dresses, the bestarched stiffness, which was the charm of 1806. Gallant colonel! It was that atmosphere of victories and conquests, even more than anything we could say to him, that made him believe so innocently in the siege of Berlin.

"From that day our military operations were much simplified. To take Berlin was only a matter of patience. From time to time, when the old man was too much bored, we would read him a letter from his son—an imaginary letter, of course, for nothing was

allowed to enter Paris, and since Sedan, Mac-Mahon's aide-de-camp had been sent to a German fortress. You can imagine the despair of that poor child, without news from her father, knowing that he was a prisoner, in need of everything, perhaps sick, and she obliged to represent him as writing joyful letters, a little short, perhaps, but such as a soldier on the field might be expected to write, always marching forward through a conquered country. Sometimes her strength gave way; then they were without news for weeks. But the old man became anxious, could not sleep. Thereupon a letter from Germany would speedily arrive, which she would bring to his bedside and read joyously, forcing back her tears. The colonel would listen religiously, smile with a knowing air, approve, criticise, and explain to us the passages that seemed a little confused. But where he was especially grand was in the replies that he sent to his son. 'Never forget that you are a Frenchman,' he would say to him. 'Be generous

to those poor people. Don't make the invasion too hard for them.' And there were recommendations without end, admirable preachments upon respect for the proprieties, the courtesy which should be shown to the ladies, a complete code of military honour for the use of conquerors. He interspersed also some general considerations upon politics, the conditions of peace to be imposed upon the vanquished. Thereupon I must say that he was not exacting.

"'A war indemnity, and nothing more. What is the use of taking their provinces? Is it possible to turn Germany into France?'

"He dictated this in a firm voice; and one was conscious of such candour in his words, of such a noble, patriotic faith, that it was impossible not to be moved while listening to him.

"Meanwhile the siege went on — not the siege of Berlin, alas! It was the time of intense cold, of the bombardment, of epi-

demics and of famine. But, thanks to our care, to our efforts, to the unwearying affection which multiplied itself about him, the old man's serenity was not disturbed for an instant. To the very end I was able to obtain white bread and fresh meat for him. There was none for anybody but him, to be sure; and you can imagine nothing more touching than those breakfasts of the grandfather, so innocently selfish — the old man seated on his bed, fresh and smiling, with a napkin at his chin, and his granddaughter beside him, a little pale because of privations, guiding his hand, helping him to drink, and to eat all those forbidden good things. Then, enlivened by the repast, in the comfort of his warm room, the winter wind whistling outside and the snow eddying about his windows, the ex-cuirassier would recall his campaigns in the north, and would describe to us for the hundredth time that terrible retreat from Russia, when they had nothing to eat but frozen biscuit and horse-flesh.

"'Do you understand that, my love? We had horse-flesh!'

"I rather think that she did understand it. For two months she had had nothing else. From that day, however, as the period of convalescence drew near, our task about the patient became more difficult. That numbness of all his senses, of all his members, which had served us so well hitherto, began to disappear. Two or three times, the terrible volleys from Porte Maillot had made him jump, with his ears pricked up like a hunting-dog; we were obliged to invent a final victory of Bazaine under the walls of Berlin, and guns fired in his honour at the Invalides. Another day when his bed had been moved to the window—it was, I believe, the Thursday of Buzenval—he saw large numbers of National Guards collected on Avenue de la Grande Armée.

"'What are all those troops?' asked the good man; and we heard him mutter between his teeth:

"'Poorly set up! Poorly set up!'

"That was all; but we understood that we must take great precautions thenceforth. Unluckily we did not take enough.

"One evening when I arrived, the girl came to me in great trouble.

"'They are to march into the city tomorrow,' she said.

"Was the grandfather's door open? In truth, on thinking it over afterwards, I remembered that his face wore an extraordinary expression that night. It is probable that he had overheard us. But we were talking of the Prussians; and the good man was thinking of the French, of that triumphal entry which he had been awaiting so long — MacMahon marching down the avenue amid flowers and flourishes of trumpets, his son beside him, and he, the old colonel, on his balcony, in full uniform as at Lutzen, saluting the torn flags and the eagles blackened by powder.

"Poor Father Jouve! He had imagined

doubtless that we intended to prevent him from witnessing that parade of our troops, in order to avoid too great excitement. So he was very careful not to mention it to any one; but the next day, at the very hour when the Prussian battalions entered hesitatingly upon the long road which leads from Porte Maillot to the Tuileries, the window up there opened softly, and the colonel appeared on the balcony, with his helmet, his long sword, all the glorious old array of one of Milhaud's cuirassiers. I wonder still what effort of the will, what sudden outburst of life had placed him thus upon his feet and in his harness. This much is sure, that he was there, standing behind the rail, amazed to find the broad avenues so silent, the blinds of the houses closed, Paris as gloomy as a huge lazaretto, flags everywhere, but such strange flags, white with little crosses, and no one to go to meet our soldiers.

"For a moment he might have thought that he was mistaken.

"But no! Yonder, behind the Arc de Triomphe, there was a confused rumbling, a black line approaching in the rising sunlight. Then, little by little, the points of the helmets gleamed, the little drums of Jena began to beat, and beneath the Arc de Triomphe, while the heavy tramp of the regiments and the clashing of the sabres beat time, Schubert's *Triumphal March* burst forth!

"Thereupon in the deathlike silence of the square, a cry rang out, a terrible cry: 'To arms! To arms! The Prussians!' and the four uhlans of the vanguard saw up yonder, on the balcony, a tall old man wave his arms, stagger, and fall. That time, Colonel Jouve was really dead.

The Little Pies

The Little Pies

I

THAT morning, which was a Sunday, Sureau, the pastry-cook on Rue Turenne, called his apprentice and said to him:

"Here are Monsieur Bonnicar's little pies; go and take them to him and come back at once. It seems that the Versaillais have entered Paris."

The little fellow, who understood nothing about politics, put the smoking hot pies in the dish, the dish in a white napkin, and balancing the whole upon his cap, started off on a run for Île St. Louis, where M. Bonnicar lived. It was a magnificent morning, one of those bright, sunny May mornings which fill the fruit-shops with clusters of cherries and bunches of lilac. Despite the distant cannonading and the bugle-calls at the corners

of the streets, that whole ancient quarter of the Marais retained its peaceful aspect. There was Sunday in the air; bands of children in the yards, tall girls playing battledore in front of the doors, and that little white silhouette, trotting along in the middle of the deserted roadway, amid a pleasant odour of hot pies, put the finishing touch of artlessness and Sunday merriment to that morning of battle. All the life of the quarter seemed to have betaken itself to Rue de Rivoli. Cannon were being drawn thither and barricades thrown up; groups of people at every step, National Guardsmen full of business. But the little pastry-cook did not lose his head. Those children are so accustomed to walking in the midst of crowds and the uproar of the street! On saints' days and holidays, when the streets are so crowded, early in the year, and on Sundays, they have the most running to do; so that revolutions hardly surprise them.

It was really pleasant to see the little white cap dodge about amid the helmets and bay-

onets, avoiding collisions, maintaining its equilibrium, sometimes very rapidly, sometimes with a compulsory slowness in which one was conscious still of a longing to run. What difference did the battle make to him? The important thing was to arrive at Bonnicar's on the stroke of noon, and to run away at once with the little fee which awaited him on the small table in the reception-room.

Suddenly there was a terrible pressure in the crowd, and wards of the Republic passed at the double-quick, singing. They were lads of twelve to fifteen years, arrayed in helmets, red belts, and high boots; as proud of being disguised as soldiers as when they run about on Mardi gras with paper caps and a strip of a fancy pink umbrella, in the mud of the boulevards. This time, in the midst of the crowd, the little pastry-cook had much difficulty in keeping his balance; but his dish and he had slipped so many times upon the ice, had played so many games of hop-scotch on the sidewalk, that the little pies escaped

with a fright. Unluckily that excitement, those songs, those red belts, combined with admiration and curiosity, aroused in the apprentice the desire to march a little way in such goodly company; and passing the Hôtel de Ville and the bridges leading to Île St. Louis without noticing them, he found himself carried I know not whither, in the dust and the wind of that wild march.

II

FOR at least twenty-five years, it had been the custom of the Bonnicars to eat little pies on Sunday. At precisely twelve o'clock, when the whole family, great and small, was assembled in the salon, a sharp and merry ring at the bell would cause them all to say:

"Ah! there 's the pastry-cook."

Thereupon, with a great moving of chairs, the rustle of Sunday clothes, the expansive joy of laughing children about the well-laden table, all those happy bourgeois would take

their places around the little pies, symmetrically heaped upon the silver chafing-dish.

That day the bell remained dumb. Monsieur Bonnicar, scandalised, looked at his clock, an old clock surmounted by a stuffed heron, which had never in its life gained or lost. The children yawned at the windows, watching the corner of the street where the apprentice usually appeared. Conversation languished, and hunger, which noon with its twelve strokes digs in the stomach, made the dining-room look very large and very dismal, despite the antique silver plate glistening on the damask cloth; and the napkins all about, folded in the shape of little stiff white horns.

Several times already the old cook had come to whisper in her master's ear: the joint burned, the peas cooked too much. But Monsieur Bonnicar was obstinately determined not to take his place at the table without the little pies; and, furiously angry with Sureau, he resolved to go himself to see what such an

unheard-of delay could mean. As he went out, brandishing his cane, hot with indignation, some neighbours warned him:

"Take care, Monsieur Bonnicar; they say that the Versaillais have entered Paris."

He refused to listen to anything, even to the cannonading which came from Neuilly, even to the alarm guns from the Hôtel de Ville, which shook all the windows in the quarter.

"Oh! that Sureau! that Sureau!"

And in his excitement he talked to himself, fancied himself already in the middle of the shop, striking the floor with his cane, making the mirrors in the show-window and the plates of sweetmeats tremble. The barricade on Pont Louis Philippe cut his wrath in two. There were some confederates there, of ferocious mien, strutting about in the sun on the unpaved ground.

"Where are you going, citizen?"

The citizen explained, but the story of the little pies seemed suspicious, especially as Monsieur Bonnicar had on his fine Sunday

coat, his gold spectacles, and wore every appearance of an old reactionary.

"He 's a spy," said the confederates; "we must send him to Rigault."

Whereupon four enthusiasts, who were not sorry to leave the barricade, pushed the unfortunate, exasperated man before them with the butts of their guns.

I know not how they accomplished it, but half an hour later they were all captured by troops of the line, and were sent off to join a long column of prisoners about to start for Versailles. Monsieur Bonnicar protested more and more loudly, brandished his cane, told his story for the hundredth time. Unfortunately the fable about the little pies seemed so absurd, so incredible in the midst of that intense excitement, that the officers simply laughed.

"That 's all right, that 's all right, old fellow. You can explain at Versailles."

And through the Champs-Élysées, still white with the smoke of the firing, the column moved off between two rows of chasseurs.

III

THE prisoners marched five by five, in close, compact ranks. To prevent the escort from being separated, they were obliged to walk arm in arm; and the long human flock, tramping along through the dust of the road, made a noise like a heavy shower.

The unfortunate Bonnicar thought that he was dreaming. Perspiring, puffing, beside himself with alarm and fatigue, he trailed along at the end of the column, between two old hags who smelt of petroleum and brandy; and from the words, "Pastry-cook, little pies," which constantly occurred in his imprecations, everybody about him thought that he had gone mad. In truth, the poor man's head was in a whirl. When they went up or down hill, and the ranks of the escort separated a little, he actually imagined that he saw, in the dust which filled the gaps, the white jacket and cap of the little apprentice at Sureau's! And that happened ten times on

the road. That little white flash passed before his eyes as if to mock at him; then disappeared amid the swell of uniforms, blouses, and rags.

At last, at nightfall, they arrived at Versailles; and when the crowd saw that old fellow with spectacles, dilapidated, dust-covered, and haggard, everybody agreed that he had the face of a villain. They said:

"It's Felix Pyat—no, it is Delescleuze."

The chasseurs of the escort had much difficulty in landing him safe and sound in the court of the orangery. Not until then could the poor flock scatter, stretch itself out on the ground, and draw breath. There were some who slept, others who swore, others who coughed, others who wept; but Bonnicar neither slept nor wept. Seated on a step, with his head in his hands, three-fourths dead with hunger, shame, and fatigue, he reviewed in his mind that unlucky day, his departure from his house, his anxious guests, that meal delayed until evening and

still awaiting him; and the humiliation, the insults, and the blows with the butts of muskets, all because of an unpunctual pastry-cook.

"Monsieur Bonnicar, here's your little pies!" suddenly said a voice close beside him; and the good man, raising his head, was greatly surprised to see the little apprentice from Sureau's, who had been arrested with the wards of the Republic, remove his cap, and hand him the dish which was concealed under his white apron. Thus it was that, despite the riot and his imprisonment, Monsieur Bonnicar had his little pies on that Sunday as on others.

The Pope Is Dead

The Pope Is Dead

I PASSED my childhood in a large provincial town cut in two by a much travelled, very restless river, where I early acquired a taste for wandering and a passion for life on the water. There was especially a corner of a certain wharf near a foot-bridge called St. Vincent, of which I never think, even to-day, without emotion. I see again the sign nailed to the end of a yard: *Cornet, boats to let;* the little ladder going down into the water, slippery and blackened with moisture; the fleet of little boats, freshly painted in bright colours, lying in a line at the foot of the ladder, swaying softly from side to side, as if made buoyant by the pretty names painted in white letters on their sterns: *The Humming-bird, The Swallow,* and so forth.

And then, among the long oars gleaming with white lead, which were drying against

the bank, Father Cornet walking about with his pail of paint, his long brushes, his tanned, furrowed, wrinkled face, with a thousand little dimples, like the river on an evening when the wind is fresh! Oh! that Father Cornet! He was the Satan of my existence, my sorrowful passion, my sin, and my remorse. What crimes he has caused me to commit, with his boats! I stayed away from school, I sold my books. What would I not have sold for an afternoon of boating!

With all my books in the bottom of the boat, my jacket off, my hat thrown back, and the pleasant, fanlike breeze from the river in my hair, I clung tightly to my oars, drawing my eyebrows together to give myself the aspect of an old sea-wolf. As long as I was in the town, I kept to the middle of the river, at an equal distance from both banks, where the old sea-wolf might have been recognised. What a triumph, to mingle with that great procession of boats, of rafts, of logs, of steamboats which glided by, skilfully

avoiding one another, separated only by a narrow streak of foam! There were heavy boats, which turned in order to make the most of the current, and thereby displaced a multitude of others.

Suddenly the wheels of a steamer would beat the water near me; or else a heavy shadow would fall upon me: the foresail of an apple-boat.

"Out of the way, you little brat!" a hoarse voice would shout; and I would struggle and sweat, entangled in the ceaseless going and coming of that life of the stream, which the life of the streets constantly crossed, on those bridges and foot-bridges which cast reflections of omnibuses over the strokes of the oars. And the current that was so strong under the arches; and the eddies, the famous hole of La Mort-qui-trompe! I tell you that it was no small matter to guide one's self through that, with arms of twelve years and no one to hold the tiller.

Sometimes I had the luck to meet the *chain*

there. I would quickly hook on at the end of those long lines of boats which it was towing, and with my oars idle, reaching out like soaring wings, I would let myself go with that silent swiftness which cut the river in long ribbons of foam, and made the trees on both banks and the houses on the quay hurry by. Before me, far, very far away, I could hear the monotonous beating of the screw, a dog barking on one of the towboats, where a thin thread of smoke rose from a low funnel; and all that gave me the illusion of a long voyage, of real life on board ship.

Unluckily, these meetings with the *chain* were rare. Generally I had to row, and row in the hours when the sun was hottest. Oh, that noonday sun falling perpendicularly upon the river! It seems to me that it burns me now. Everything glared and glistened. Through that blinding and sonorous atmosphere, which hovers over the waves and vibrates with their every movement, the short strokes of my oars, the tow-lines rising

from the water all dripping, would cause vivid flashes of polished silver to pass. And I would row with my eyes closed. At times, on account of the vigour of my efforts and the rush of the water under my boat, I imagined that I was going very fast; but on raising my head, I always saw the same tree, the same wall opposite me on the bank.

At last, by tiring myself out, I would succeed in leaving the city, all dripping and flushed with heat. The uproar of the cold baths, of the laundresses' boats, of the landing-floats, diminished. The bridges stretched across the broadening river here and there. Suburban gardens, a factory chimney, were reflected in the water at intervals. Green islands trembled on the horizon. Then, unable to row any more, I would draw up against the bank, amid the reeds all buzzing with life; and there, overcome by the sun, fatigue, and the heavy heat that rose from the water studded with great yellow flowers, the old sea-wolf would bleed at the nose for hours at a

time. My voyages never had any other end. But what would you have? I called that delightful.

But the terrible part was the return to the town and home. In vain would I row back with all my strength; I always arrived too late, long after the school was dismissed. The impression of the falling night, the first jets of gas in the fog, all augmented my fear and my remorse. The people who passed, returning tranquilly to their homes, aroused my envy; and I would run along, with an aching head, full of sunshine and water, with the roaring of shells in my ears, and on my face the blush for the lie that I was going to tell.

For I had to tell one every time, to meet that terrible "Where have you been?" which awaited me at the door. It was that question on my arrival that frightened me most. I had to reply on the spot, on my feet; always to have a story ready, something to say, and something so surprising, so impressive, that the surprise cut short all the questioning.

That gave me time to go in and to take breath; and to attain that end, nothing cost too much. I invented terrible tales: revolutions, a whole quarter of the town on fire, the railway bridge fallen into the river. But the worst thing that I invented was this:

That evening I arrived home very late. My mother, who had been expecting me for an hour, was standing at the top of the stairs watching for me.

"Where have you been?" she cried.

Tell me what deviltry a child's head may not hold. I had thought of nothing, prepared nothing. I had come too fast. Suddenly a wild idea passed through my head. I knew that the dear woman was very pious, as fervent a Catholic as a Roman, and I answered in all the breathlessness of intense emotion:

"O mamma! If you knew!"

"What? What is it now?"

"The Pope is dead."

"The Pope is dead!" exclaimed my poor mother, and she leaned against the wall, as

pale as death. I hurried into my room, a little frightened by my success and the enormity of the lie. But I had the courage to maintain it to the end. I remember a dismal but pleasant evening; my father very serious, my mother crushed. They talked in undertones at the table. I lowered my eyes, but my escapade was so entirely buried in the general desolation that no one thought about it.

They vied with one another in citing some instance of the virtue of poor Pius IX.; then, little by little, the conversation strayed back through the history of the popes. Aunt Rose spoke of Pius VII., whom she remembered very well to have seen in the south, in a post-chaise, between gendarmes. Somebody recalled the famous scene with the Emperor: *Comediante! tragediante!* It was fully the hundredth time that I had heard that terrible scene described, always with the same intonations, the same gestures, and the stereotyped formula of family traditions which one generation bequeaths to another, and which

never change, as childish and as purely local as convent stories.

However, it had never seemed so interesting to me.

I listened with hypocritical sighs, frequent questions, an assumed air of interest, and all the time I was saying to myself:

"To-morrow morning, when they learn that the Pope is not dead, they will be so glad that no one will have the courage to scold me."

Thinking thus, my eyes closed in spite of myself, and I had visions of little boats painted blue, with little corners of the Saone made drowsy by the heat, and long claws of water-spiders darting in every direction and cutting the glassy river like diamond-points.

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